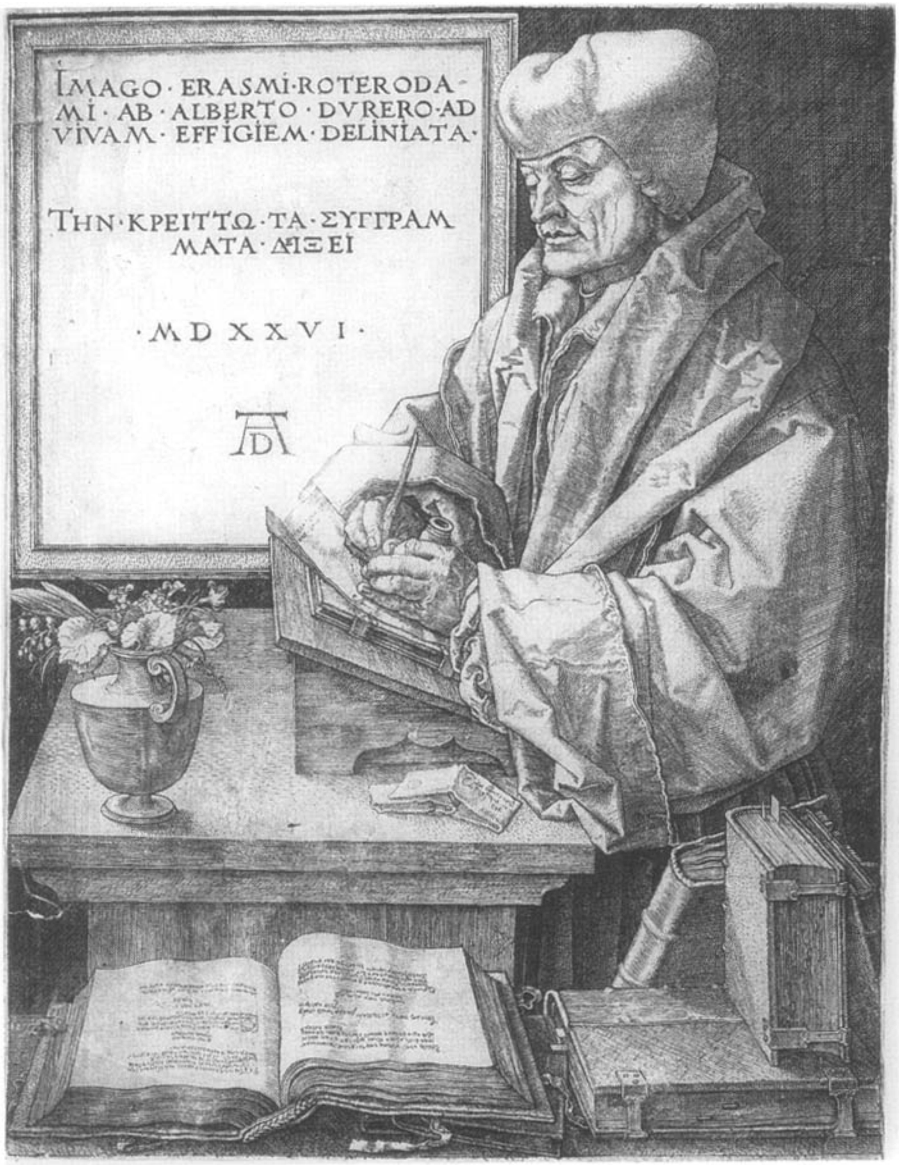
COLLECTED WORKS
OF
ERASMUS

CONTROVERSIES

COLLECTED WORKS OF ERASMUS

VOLUME 77


IMAGO · ERASMI · ROTERODA-
MI · AB · ALBERTO · DVRERO · AD
VIVAM · EFFIGIEM · DELINIATA ·
ΤΗΝ · ΚΡΕΙΤΤΩ · ΤΑ · ΣΥΓΓΡΑΜ
ΜΑΤΑ · ΔΕΙΞΕΙ
· MDXXVI ·
AD

Erasmus
Copperplate engraving by Albrecht Dürer, 1526
Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Royale Albert I, Brussels

COLLECTED WORKS OF
ERASMUS

CONTROVERSIES

HYPERASPISTES 2

edited by Charles Trinkaus

translated by Clarence H. Miller

annotated by Clarence H. Miller and Charles Trinkaus

University of Toronto Press

Toronto / Buffalo / London

www.utppublishing.com

The research and publication costs of the
Collected Works of Erasmus are supported by
University of Toronto Press.

© University of Toronto Press 2000

Toronto / Buffalo / London
Printed in Canada

ISBN 0-8020-4756-4

Printed on acid-free paper

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Erasmus, Desiderius, d. 1536
[Works]
Collected works of Erasmus

Partial contents: v. 77. Controversies: Hyperaspistes 2 /
edited by Charles Trinkaus / translated by Clarence H. Miller.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-8020-4756-4 (v. 77)

1. Erasmus, Desiderius, d. 1536. I. Title

PA8500 1974 876'.04 C74-006326-X rev

University of Toronto Press acknowledges the financial assistance to its publishing program of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council.

University of Toronto Press acknowledges the financial support for its publishing activities of the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP)

Collected Works of Erasmus

The aim of the Collected Works of Erasmus
is to make available an accurate, readable English text
of Erasmus' correspondence and his
other principal writings. The edition is planned
and directed by an Editorial Board, an Executive Committee,
and an Advisory Committee.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Alexander Dalzell, University of Toronto
James M. Estes, University of Toronto
Charles Fantazzi, University of Windsor
James K. Farge, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies
John N. Grant, University of Toronto
Paul F. Grendler, University of Toronto
James K. McConica, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, *Chairman*
John H. Munro, University of Toronto
John O'Malley, Weston Jesuit School of Theology
Mechtilde O'Mara, University of Toronto
Jane E. Phillips, University of Kentucky
Erika Rummel, Wilfrid Laurier University
R.J. Schoeck, Lawrence, Kansas
Robert D. Sider, Dickinson College
James D. Tracy, University of Minnesota

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Alexander Dalzell, University of Toronto
James M. Estes, University of Toronto
Charles Fantazzi, University of Windsor
Paul F. Grendler, University of Toronto
Bill Harnum, University of Toronto Press
James K. McConica, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies
George Meadows, University of Toronto Press
John O'Malley, Weston Jesuit School of Theology
Mechtilde O'Mara, University of Toronto

Jane E. Phillips, University of Kentucky
Erika Rummel, Wilfrid Laurier University
R.J. Schoeck, Lawrence, Kansas
R.M. Schoeffel, University of Toronto Press, *Chairman*
Robert D. Sider, Dickinson College
James D. Tracy, University of Minnesota

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Maria Cytowska, University of Warsaw
Anthony Grafton, Princeton University
Robert M. Kingdon, University of Wisconsin
Maurice Lebel, Université Laval
Jean-Claude Margolin, Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance de Tours
Bruce M. Metzger, Princeton Theological Seminary
Clarence H. Miller, Saint Louis University
Heiko A. Oberman, University of Arizona
John Rowlands, The British Museum
J.S.G. Simmons, Oxford University
John Tedeschi, University of Wisconsin
J. Trapman, Conseil International ASD
J.B. Trapp, Warburg Institute

Contents

Illustrations
ix

Preface
xi

A Warrior Shielding A Discussion of Free Will, book two
Hyperaspistes liber secundus
translated by Clarence H. Miller
annotated by Clarence H. Miller and Charles Trinkaus
333

Works Frequently Cited
752

Short-Title Forms for Erasmus' Works
755

Index of Scriptural References
759

General Index
773

This page intentionally left blank

Illustrations

Erasmus
frontispiece

Luther
643

This page intentionally left blank

Preface

Hyperaspistes book two is the continuation of Erasmus' controversy with Luther. Published by Johann Froben in summer/fall 1527, it is the longest and most detailed of Erasmus' anti-Lutheran writings and closely linked to those translated in CWE 76: *De libero arbitrio διατριβή sive collatio / A Discussion of Free Will* (Basel: Johann Froben, September 1524) and *Hyperaspistes liber unus / A Warrior Shielding A Discussion of Free Will against The Enslaved Will by Martin Luther, book one* (Basel: Johann Froben, winter and summer 1526). Article 36 of Martin Luther's *Assertio omnium articulorum per bullam Leonis X novissimam damnatorum* of late December 1520 is also translated in CWE 76.

The *Assertion* was Luther's formal reply, article by article, to the bull condemning him: *Exsurge Domine*, issued 15 June 1520 by Pope Leo X. Article 36 was Luther's repudiation of the orthodox Catholic teaching that humans by their own freely willed good deeds might in proper relationship to divine grace contribute to their own salvation. In responding to Luther, as he had been widely urged to do by supporters and officials of the Roman Catholic church, Erasmus chose, from among several doctrinal possibilities, to base his response on a defence of article 36 of *Exsurge Domine*, which proclaimed free will. The doctrine of free will, and the importance of humans' contributing to their own salvation, was a fundamental postulate of Erasmus' own moral and religious thought.

It is important to realize, therefore, that CWE 77 is a closely linked companion volume to CWE 76. These two volumes contain the arsenal that Erasmus brought to bear in his controversy with Martin Luther. At the same time – together with Luther's response to Erasmus' *Discussion*: *De servo arbitrio / The Enslaved Will*, published in December 1525 – these interrelated texts play an important role in defining the intellectual, moral, and religious components of humanist and Reformation thought.

The structure of each of these works is important. *A Discussion of Free Will* has a preface, an introduction, a brief definition of free will, and then major sections on passages from the Old Testament and the New that support or seem to oppose free will, in which Erasmus refutes Luther's interpretation of biblical passages in article 36 of his *Assertion*. Luther's *Enslaved Will* replies to Erasmus' work section by section, biblical passage by biblical passage. The argumentation in the two works is closely matched, except that Luther's reply became much larger than Erasmus' *Discussion*. Erasmus' first response to Luther's reply, *Hyperaspistes* 1, although sizeable, covered only Luther's treatment of Erasmus' preface, introduction, and definition of free will. *Hyperaspistes* 2 responds at great length to Luther's already lengthy treatment of the biblical passages presented by Erasmus in *A Discussion* as supporting free will or only seemingly opposing it.

In other words the series of works by Luther and Erasmus is a closely interlocked, sequentially expanding polemic. Leo X's bull *Exsurge Domine* begets Luther's *Assertion*, of which article 36 becomes the object of Erasmus' attack in *A Discussion of Free Will*, which, in turn, Luther attempts to refute in *The Enslaved Will* and Erasmus defends in *Hyperaspistes* 1, followed by *Hyperaspistes* 2, which is more than twice as long. The major parts of Erasmus' treatise and the sections within them have been given titles in this translation and annotated to indicate the corresponding parts or sections or Luther's work that are under discussion. The reader who has access to either the Weimar edition of the Latin text (WA 18) or the English translation in *Luther's Works* (LW 33) may therefore easily follow both sides of the argument.

The texts in this controversy, which is of major importance in religious and intellectual history, may be cumbersome, but it is not unrewarding to follow the unfolding arguments of these two major proponents of biblical theology as they wrestle over the meaning of scriptural texts. Moreover, the very sharpness of the controversy clarifies both the differences and the similarities of these sometimes rival streams of early modern culture.

The introduction in CWE 76 is intended for both volumes. Tables of divisions and correspondences in Erasmus' *Discussion*, Luther's *The Enslaved Will* and both books of Erasmus' *Hyperaspistes* are at the end of CWE 76; indexes for the two volumes are at the end of CWE 77.

CT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are very grateful to Cornelis Augustijn, not only for providing his typescript of the first edition, but also for examining the translation and commentary very carefully and making many improvements and suggestions. So too we owe a very large debt to Alexander Dalzell, who read the translation and commentary with extraordinary care and improved them in many places. Finally, in this volume and in volume 76, we were helped enormously by our copyeditor, Mary Baldwin, who smoothed out many troublesome anfractuosities on the road to an accurate and finished volume. The index was prepared by Ruth Pincoe, and the volumes were typeset by Lynn Burdon and Philippa Matheson.

CHM and CT

This page intentionally left blank

A WARRIOR SHIELDING
A DISCUSSION OF FREE WILL
BOOK TWO

Hyperaspistes liber secundus

The Latin text here translated is a typescript of the first edition of *Hyperaspistes 2* (Basel: Froben 1527)[1] generously provided by Cornelis Augustijn, who prepared it for the Amsterdam *Opera omnia*. The text has been compared with that of the 1703 Leiden edition (LB X), and, in difficult places, with copies of the first edition and the second, unauthorized edition ([Nürnberg] 1527)[2] in the British Library; the readings of these editions are occasionally discussed in the commentary. The first edition has no paragraphs, and I have supplied those which appear in the translation. Up till now this work has never been translated or annotated, nor are there any other Latin editions. As in translating *Hyperaspistes 1*, I have not felt bound to translate a Latin word always with the same English word, except that I have tried to be consistent in translating technical terms. In the commentary I have noted and discussed occasional flaws or difficulties in Erasmus' Latin.

CHM

---

* * * * *

Works cited frequently are referred to in the notes in abbreviated form; a list of abbreviations and full bibliographical information is given at 752–4 below. References to Erasmus' correspondence are either to the English translation of the letters in CWE, where these have already been published, or to the Latin edition of Allen. Biblical references are identified according to the Vulgate designations and numbering. References to *Patrologia Latina* and *Patrologia Graeca* give the numbers at the top of the columns, not the numbers that sometimes appear within the columns.

[1] No 1122 in Irmgard Bezzel *Erasmusdrucke des 16. Jahrhunderts in Bayerischen Bibliotheken* (Stuttgart 1979)

[2] No 1123 in Bezzel

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM TO CONSCIENTIOUS READERS, GREETINGS[1]

For my part, after that first skirmish in *Hyperaspistes*, however hasty it was, I had decided to let the affair drop, not so much out of an aversion to an irksome task – although I freely confess that by temperament I shrink from such wrangling quarrels no less than from the very gates of hell – as because I could not see that any good could come of it. For what is the point of struggling with someone who has no regard at all for the Doctors of the church all the way back to the time of the apostles, no matter how much they are commended by learning or holiness, or for the decrees of councils, no matter how ancient, or for the consensus of the Christian people; who accepts nothing except the testimony of undeniable Scripture but claims for himself alone the right to modify Scripture in accordance with his own will[2] and his only, with the opinions of others flitting about like empty shades;[3] who generates new words for things whenever it is convenient, making up new definitions, new distinctions, new paradoxes, souring the whole dispute and every part of it with insults, and jumbling everything together with such inexhaustible loquacity that anyone trying to answer him is overwhelmed with disgust. And yet he imagines he is fighting marvellously well, time and again celebrating triumphs, croaking his vainglorious incantations at us, shouting triumphal paeans at almost every single proposition.

Add to this the excessively harsh, not to say malicious, judgments of some persons and their excessively persistent suspicions. Because in *Discussion* I deliberately avoided insults so that the clouds of emotion might be dispersed and the truth shine forth more brightly, some people took this to mean that I was colluding with Luther. Then again, some others spread abroad the notion that I did not deploy all the powers of my native ability; they gather this from the fact that, although in some places, according to them, I bore down on him and pressed him vigorously, nevertheless I seem somewhat feeble and timid in other places, deliberately drawing in my claws and sparing my adversary. Though this suspicion is absolutely unfair, even more absurd is the suspicion of those who keep on saying that we are still in cahoots with each other, even now, after Luther's furious raging at me, after my skirmishing with him in *Hyperaspistes* – where I spoke freely enough, I think, though without insolence (a point in which I am glad

* * * * *

[1] This letter is Ep 1853, assigned by Allen to August 1527.

[2] Latin *arbitratu*, playing on *arbitrium* 'choice'

[3] *Adagia* II iii 53

to acknowledge my inferiority). Good lord, if such a bloodly confrontation is nothing more than collusion, what would it take for such people to call something a fight?

There were other reasons – and not insignificant ones – which persuaded me that it would be better to deal with subjects that are both more fruitful and more suited to our times. But since friends have exercised their right to require me to keep my word,[4] and then too, because those who favour Luther or are prejudiced against me are boasting that I have given up the fight and am yielding the victory to my adversary – especially since Luther himself acts as if there had been no response at all and celebrates his triumphs with sufficient vainglory in a German pamphlet, challenging me contemptuously,[5] or rather farting in everyone's face[6] with that most boastful term of his, 'defiance'[7] – I am returning to the fray. With Luther I know that I will accomplish nothing more than to make him applaud his own teachings even more outrageously, making them even more absurd. But I do so partly to keep my word, which I gave publicly and signed by my own hand as it were, and partly to lend firmness to those whose minds are vacillating, to offer a healing remedy to those who are infected. May he whose cause I believe I am defending bring this about, either through me or through someone else.

I will not delay you with any more prefatory remarks, my dear reader, so that you can be more fresh and unwearied in your understanding of the subject matter. Farewell.

* * * * *

[4] As Thomas More did, for example, in a letter to Erasmus dated 18 December 1526 (Allen Ep 1770); cf CWE 76 introduction lxxix–lxxxiv.

[5] Cf Horace *Satires* 1.4.14 and *Adagia* III vi 45.

[6] Cf Horace *Satires* 1.9.70.

[7] In the original the word is not Latin but the German *Trotz*. Luther used this word to defy the king of England and Erasmus in his German pamphlet (1527) replying to the king's attack against him; see *Martin Luthers Antwort* WA 23 27:1, 33:7, 36:16.

HYPERASPISTES:[1] A WARRIOR SHIELDING A DISCUSSION OF FREE WILL BY DESIDERIUS ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM
BOOK TWO

[INTRODUCTION AND RECAPITULATION OF BOOK 1]

Somehow or other I have finally struggled out of the thickets of wrangling and the burs and thorns of insults. For so it was that Luther always saw fit to waste most of his volume in quarrels, jeers, and insults. In what remains to be done, we can proceed somewhat more expeditiously.[2] Not that he can ever change his stripes,[3] but here the density of the argumentation and the frequent evidence from Scripture did not leave much room for verbal abuse – though even in these parts there are so many boasts, jeers, and wisecracks that very little space is left for the subject at hand. Therefore it is better to ignore the insults and address myself to my readers, since I have quarrelled sufficiently with that person and in invective he is a past master. But actually, even in that part, while I was quarrelling, I scattered in passing some seeds of arguments to come, pointing out reasons that would confirm my points and refute his.

But because Luther's unbearable wordiness and amazing distortions have thrown up smokescreens[4] everywhere, it will not be out of order to place before the reader's eyes once more an outline or summary of what has been said in so far as it applies to the matter at hand.

First I showed that what Luther so often charges me with, namely that my *Discussion* does no more than teach that there is such a thing as free will, is absolutely false – indeed, on the very face of it, patently unreal –

* * * * *

[1] On the title, see *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 96 n1.

[2] In reply to the first 67 pages of *De servo arbitrio* in WA 18, *Hyperaspistes 1* took up 86 columns in LB. Erasmus' response to the remaining 121 pages of Luther will take 200 columns.

[3] *Adagia* III x 32

[4] Cf *Adagia* I iii 41. Erasmus often accuses Luther of sending up smokescreens.

since I explain there at length what free will is, what it was like when it was established, how it was corrupted, how it is healed, what evil or good it can do before it is restored, what power it has with the help of grace, what it does when it assents to operating grace, and what it does when it cooperates with cooperating grace.[5] Even so, since he simply denies that there is such a thing as free will, if I had shown that there is such a thing, I would have won the victory. For on other questions, such as what it does and how much power it has, orthodox teachers have various opinions, but at the same time they agree that there is such a thing.

Next I took him up on his dispute about the term. For I did not make up the phrase 'free choice,' but rather it comes down to us in an unbroken succession from the earliest Doctors of the church. If someone wants to call it will that can turn either way, towards evil and towards good, it makes no difference to me. Still, Augustine[6] and Bernard[7] sometimes seem to apply the term 'free choice' even to the natural assent of the will, which cannot be forced unless it forces itself. And this freedom they attribute even to the Pharaoh and to wicked spirits, in whom the will, to be sure, is not free to do good or evil but only to assent – a power that belongs to human nature and that constitutes a difference between man and animals and inanimate things, which have only appetite, not will. For where there is no reason there is also no will. Furthermore, they say that wherever there is will there is also freedom. And of the two words St Bernard refers 'choice' to reason and 'free' to the will; reason judges and admonishes, will chooses or at least assents.[8] Augustine, in book 3 of *Hypognosticon* (if indeed this work, however learned, should be attributed to him), writes that by the sin of Adam free will lost the benefit of being able to choose good but retained its name and its basic character.[9] And I quite agree that the term bespeaks pride if we weigh it according to the corrupt nature of man, although the Greek expression for it is even more proud,[10] as if the will

* * * * *

[5] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 30 n109.

[6] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 2.2 PL 44 882: 'Revelavit autem nobis per Scripturas suas sanctas, esse in homine liberum voluntatis arbitrium' ('Now he has revealed to us through his Holy Scriptures, that there is in man a will which has free choice').

[7] Bernard of Clairvaux *Tractatus* 1.2 in *Opera omnia* III 167 / *On Grace and Free Choice* in *Treatises* III 54–6

[8] Bernard *Tractatus* 2.3 in *Opera omnia* III 167–8 / *On Grace and Free Choice* in *Treatises* III 57–8

[9] See this pseudo-Augustinian work, book 3, chapters 1–2 PL 45 1621–2.

[10] Erasmus gives the Greek word *αὐτεξούσιον* 'one's own power.'

could do whatever it wished. But as long as there is agreement about the thing itself, it is pointless to fight to the death about the term. The term has been used by some who attribute as little as possible to the human will and assign everything to grace, such as Ambrose in his book *The Calling of the Gentiles* – I do not care if someone wants to attribute the work to someone else, for whoever it was he was not inferior to Ambrose – and so too Jerome, Augustine, and Bernard.[11] It seems to me that free choice can be said to be the will as it is free to choose, not completely so, as it was when it was created, but in accord with the remnants of that condition and the native ability which can be restored by grace, just as a person is said to be robust if his body is such by nature and can be restored to its previous strength, even though its native vigour has been temporarily reduced by sickness.

It is clearly accepted by the orthodox that when man was first created, he, together with the angels, had a will which was free to persevere in the good or to turn aside to the bad and that sin cannot be imputed where there is no free choice at all. I exclude infants and the retarded, whose reason is a special case.

And so the sin of Adam and even more the additional sins which some call 'personal' rendered man's free will faint, not extinct, wounded, not killed, crippled by an injury, not amputated, left half-alive, not dead.

I taught that it is not absurd to call something free if it is so by its own nature, even though through some accident its liberty has been lost, just as in our ordinary way of speaking we apply the term 'free' to those who are born free and have fallen into the hands of their enemies and who would revert to their previous status if they should escape, placing more emphasis on their birth than on their present plight.

And besides, what is imperfect does not totally lose the basis for being given a name, as, for example, someone who is weaker than usual is not immediately called sick.

Finally, a natural ability maintains the distinction of keeping its name, as someone might say that the human body can turn in either direction, towards health and towards sickness, even though it cannot preserve or regain its health without a physician. For let us suppose that is the case for the sake of argument.

---

[11] Pseudo-Ambrose *De vocatione omnium gentium* 1.23–4 PL 51 676–85; Jerome Ep 133.5–6 CSEL 56 248–51; Augustine *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 6.13–8.20 PL 44 889–93; Bernard *Tractatus* 14.48 in *Opera omnia* III 201 / *On Grace and Free Choice* in *Treatises* III 108

I demonstrated that even the unregenerate retain some of the light of reason by which the philosophers, according to Paul,[12] attained to a knowledge of God's nature without grace. By the same token it was shown that these same persons retain some desire for what is right. These are the seeds or the remnants of inborn freedom.

I showed that there are three kinds of grace: one is natural, for according to Paul 'in God we live and move and have our being';[13] another invites us to what is better, which Augustine calls 'operating' and sometimes 'impelling,' at times 'preparatory' and in other places 'prevenient,' which does not confer perfect innocence but prepares for it;[14] the third is 'justifying' grace, which Augustine calls 'cooperating.'[15] Bernard adds 'perfecting' grace, holding that the human will does not do anything either at the beginning or at the end but only cooperates with grace in the process in between the two.[16]

We declared that there is nothing absurd about more than one cause operating to produce a single effect or about the will being both active and acted upon, as Augustine teaches in his book *Reproof and Grace*, chapter 2,[17] as well as in other places.

The will, however, can be said to be free in three ways: either because it brings to completion whatever it wills, and this is proper only to God; or because it wills, indeed, but with a force that is ineffective without the help of grace; or because it does what it wills even when that is evil because no one prevents it from doing so. In this last way it is free even in evil persons unless it is restrained by all-powerful grace. In the second way it is present to a certain degree both in wicked persons because of the influx of nature[18] and in evil persons because of impelling grace, unless you prefer to identify the influx of nature with impelling grace.[19]

* * * * *

---

[12] Rom 1:18–20

[13] Acts 17:28. On the *concursus generalis* see *A Discussion* CWE 76 31 nn111–12, 115.

[14] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 24 n79.

[15] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 30 n109.

[16] Bernard *Tractatus* 14.46 in *Opera omnia* III 199 / *On Grace and Free Choice* in *Treatises* III 105–6. Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 32 n121.

[17] *De correptione et gratia* 2 PL 44 917–18

[18] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 31 n112.

[19] Evil persons are free in the third way (they are not prevented from doing what they will) if God's grace does not prevent them from doing what they will. That seems clear enough. It is the second category that causes the problem. This consists of unregenerate persons, persons who have no grace but

Some plausibly believe that this grace is never lacking to anyone and that it has never been lacking in any era, and that what is sufficient for salvation – I am speaking of adults – will certainly not be lacking to anyone unless he or she lacks the will to respond to grace when it is offered.[20] A person lacks the will to respond to grace in two ways: if he either scorns impelling grace or attributes to his own merits what is owing to the divine grace; or if, once he has tasted the gift of God, he returns to his vomit.[21] On the other hand, he does not lack such will if he accommodates his natural powers and his mental desire to operating grace.[22]

I showed that my definition – or rather description – is neither deficient nor lame, neither redundant nor wicked, as Luther tried to make it by means of the distortions he imposed on it.[23]

I showed that he was out of his mind when he talked about the various opinions which I distinguished. Hence many of his arguments are aimless and empty, since he ignores my purpose. For I reject as long since condemned the teaching of Pelagius, according to which grace is owing to human merit. The opinion nearest to this, which is of uncertain origin and is now held by the scholastics, I neither support nor reject, namely the doctrine that by morally good works, done by his own natural powers, a person can make such progress that God in his goodness will not deny his grace to anyone who does the very best he can.[24] Nevertheless, instead of this opinion I prefer that of Augustine: though he attributes the beginning,

* * * * *

do have the influx of nature, which Erasmus has just spoken of as a sort of natural grace (two paragraphs earlier). Such a person is free to will the good because of his natural inclination, activated by the influx of nature, but he cannot perform it without impelling grace. The second category seems also to include evil persons who have impelling grace offered to them; they have free will in the sense that they can refuse it, and hence they lack the help of grace and cannot perform what is good. The final clause in this sentence, 'unless you prefer to identify the former [that is, the influx of nature] with impelling grace,' is hardly helpful, since the two are quite distinct; but it is true that if they were identified with each other, the two groups in the second category would also be identical (everyone has the influx of nature, but not everyone has impelling grace).

[20] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 32 n119.

[21] Prov 26:11; 2 Pet 2:22

[22] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 24 n79 and 30 n109.

[23] Erasmus' working definition of free will in *A Discussion* (CWE 76 21) was attacked by Luther in *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 661–7 / LW 33 102–11 and defended by Erasmus in *Hyperaspistes* 1 (CWE 76 261–91).

[24] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 32 n119.

the progress, and the conclusion to grace, nevertheless he posits free will in mankind, which, though it is ineffective without grace, can still cause a person to be judged as wicked. And he does not allow a person to claim anything for himself because of his good works, not because a person's will does nothing in good deeds but because the sum and substance of them ought to be attributed to him from whom all good proceeds, including even our natural powers. And this opinion I call probable, setting out to try to discover by means of debate whether a better one can be found. For in such books by Augustine as *The Predestination of the Saints, Grace and Free Will,* and also *Reproof and Grace* certain points are brought up which are not sufficiently explained.[25]

After this enumeration, I indicate with which opinions I disagree most strongly, namely with two, one of which Karlstadt propounded in his disputation with Eck. He teaches that in a good deed the human will does not act but is only acted upon by operating grace, so that he will not accept the formulation 'grace acts through the human will in a good deed' but requires us instead to say that 'grace acts in the human will.' But still, he does not absolutely deny that free will exists.[26] The second opinion is that of Luther, not the one he lays down at the beginning of his *Assertion* but the one he asserts in the heat of discussion: that there is no such thing as free will but rather that all things, both good and bad, from the least to the greatest, occur by absolute necessity.[27] Because Luther lumps these three latter opinions together as only one[28] and because the arguments of my discussion, which are exploratory and not definitive, apply now to one of them, now to another, he pours out a lot of useless verbiage, as I will show.

---

[25] Indeed these three works of Augustine attempt to analyse and resolve some of the most difficult problems posed by the seeming conflict between free will and grace (neither of which Augustine is willing to relinquish): how can one person be predestined to be saved by grace and another not, entirely apart from their merits or demerits (*De praedestinatione sanctorum* 1.15–16 PL 44 971–3); how can the choices of free will matter if they have no bearing on the bestowal of saving grace (*De gratia et libero arbitrio* 1.6–8 PL 44 889–93); why reproach someone if it is not within his power to earn the grace which would enable him to do the deeds that would save him (*De correptione et gratia* 1.4 PL 44 919)? Augustine, of course, has answers for these questions, though he sometimes is forced to resort to the inscrutability of God's judgments and will. The scholastic doctrines of *facere quod in se est* and *meritum de congruo* were attempts to refine and ameliorate Augustine's positions.

[26] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 6 n4 and 33 n123, and *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 278–9. On Karlstadt's distinction between grace acting in the will and through the will, see Seitz *Leipziger Disputation* 27–8.

[27] For Luther's two opinions see *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 142: 25–35, 146: 4–9 / CWE 76 301 and 305–6. For Karlstadt see the preceding note.

This repetition ought not to be irksome to the reader, since it will provide not a little light in the the labyrinth of the arguments. Now to the matter at hand.

[ERASMUS' RESPONSE TO LUTHER'S CRITIQUE OF ERASMUS' ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING FREE WILL]

[*Old Testament passages*]

The first text I cited in favour of free will is Ecclesiasticus 15[:14–18]: 'God created man from the beginning, etc.'[29] If I make it quite clear what sort of workman Luther is in treating this passage, I would wish my reader to guess from this what his other arguments are like. Although in the course of the argument I sometimes use a debater's right to ask an unfair share to get a fair one, as they say,[30] Luther presses me on individual points as if I were making a summary pronouncement. And then he never stops referring everything to that probable opinion,[31] as if I were concerned only with it. If that had been the case, I would not have called it 'probable' but rather 'certain' and 'undoubted.' Moreover, he makes no distinction between mankind as it was created in the beginning and mankind after the Fall, although that blockheaded *Discussion*[32] of mine does so. Then too, though I previously distinguished between 'to will in whatever way' and 'to will efficaciously,' his response concerning this passage presumes that I always mean efficacious will, what he calls 'to will freely.' Whenever I say 'to be able' he takes it to mean 'to be completely able' and 'to be able by one's own powers and without the aid of grace.' But whoever reads my *Discussion* will find that it is quite otherwise. Finally he

* * * * *

[28] Erasmus accuses Luther of lumping the opinions of Augustine and Karlstadt together with his own necessitarianism.

[29] Erasmus' analysis of this passage is *A Discussion* CWE 76 21–7. Luther's reply is *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 671–6 / LW 33 117–25.

[30] *Adagia* II iii 26

[31] Erasmus means the opinion of Augustine (see 341–2 above).

[32] The Latin for Discussion (*diatriba*) and the Greek from which it is derived (διατριβή) are feminine nouns, and Luther personifies Erasmus' work as an addle-pated woman. See *A Discussion* CWE 76 5 n1.

does not remember that the insults he levels at my *Discussion* also light upon the sainted Doctors of the church, certainly on Augustine, in whom Luther also usually puts great stock. For in his book *Grace and Free Will,* where he is fighting with all his might for grace and against the Pelagians, Augustine cites this passage as a principal argument against those who deny free will, and after citing the text he adds this brief comment: 'Look,' he says, 'here we see mankind's free will very clearly exhibited.'[33] Augustine pronounces; I debate. In that place Augustine is dealing with fallen mankind; I had distinguished mankind as it was created from fallen mankind.

[*The interpretation of Ecclesiasticus 15:11–22*]

But when Luther says that he has a right to take exception to the authority of this book, which goes under the title of Ecclesiasticus,[34] because in the past it was not in the canon of the Jews, either he is inconsistent or he gives little credit to the authority of the Catholic church.[35] For previously he had said that the book of Esther, which is in the canon of the Jews, is especially worthy of being removed from the canon; and here he attributes such great authority to their canon that he proclaims he is free to reject a book that the Catholic church accepts as a holy source of its public liturgy, often beginning mass with a text from this book instead of a psalm[36] or taking something from it to be read as the Epistle.[37] Even St Augustine himself borrows weapons from this book to transfix heretics, and when they in turn aimed

* * * * *

[33] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 2.3 PL 44 883

[34] Because a more correct title is 'The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach'

[35] Luther raised his objections to the canonicity of Ecclesiasticus in *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 666:9–24 / LW 33 110; Erasmus replied in *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 291–3.

[36] Erasmus seems to refer to the introit, the first variable prayer of the mass. Texts for the introit are usually from the Psalms, but some are taken from Ecclesiasticus. See *Missale Romanum Mediolani 1474 and A Collation with Other Editions Printed before 1570* ed Robert Lippe, 2 vols, Henry Bradshaw Society 17 and 33 (London 1899 and 1907) I 23, 350, 398, 409, 410, 430. Several of the opening antiphons for the psalms of the divine office are also taken from Ecclesiasticus. See, for example, *Corpus antiphonalium officii* ed René-Jean Hespert, 6 vols (Rome 1963–79) III 103, 106, 113 nos 1851, 1877, 1935 (Ecclus 39:12, 51:1–6, 44:14).

[37] *Missale Romanum Mediolani* (see preceding note) gives several Epistles from Ecclesiasticus to be read at mass throughout the year (I 23, 68, 300, 304, 351, 364, 367, 369, 375) as well as several also in the commons of various kinds of saints (I 403, 411–12, 443–5, 423, 431–3, 456).

at him arguments drawn from it, he does not have recourse to rejecting it but rather to interpreting it soundly.[38] And so the insult thrown at me here should be thrown at Augustine. For this is how that misguided man plays his games: 'The opinion which is to be confirmed by Ecclesiasticus stated one thing, and Ecclesiasticus is cited to confirm something else, as if someone should attempt to prove that Christ is the Messiah by citing a passage proving that Pilate was the governor of Judaea.'[39] For in the book I cited, Augustine stated the same thing I did, except that he claims anyone who thinks otherwise is a heretic,[40] whereas among various other opinions I call this one probable; and yet this is the passage Augustine considered most manifest and placed in the vanguard of his arguments against those who deny that mankind has free will – to overlook for the moment the charge that for Luther to say Christ is the Messiah is like saying the devil is a slanderer, for there is no difference between these words except that one is Greek and the other Hebrew.[41] Then what he adds, 'is poles apart,'[42] is equally foolish. But it is best to pass over such things, for they contribute nothing to the argument proper, though they show the thoughtlessness of this person, who claims for himself something beyond the measure of man.

It is worthwhile to hear how he shakes and sifts this passage, for he does so not like a person examining something carefully but like a wild horse shaking its rider off the saddle and into the mud. These words, he says, 'God established man from the beginning and left him in the hands of his own counsel,' pertain to mankind as it was first created and do not make for free will because there is no mention of the precepts for which free will is required. That is what Luther says.[43] What could be more shameless than such an argument? Creation came first; it was soon succeeded by a

* * * * *

---

[38] He does so, for example in *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 16.32 PL 44 900, reinterpreting Ecclus 15:16 (in the Septuagint version), which the Pelagians had attempted to use in support of their case.

[39] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 671:21–6 / LW 33 117–18. Luther has just claimed that the 'probable' opinion to be supported by Ecclesiasticus is that the will is not free to choose the good. Actually the opinion Erasmus called probable, that is, the opinion of Augustine, does not assert that the will is not free to choose good; that opinion is Karlstadt's.

[40] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 2.3–4 PL 44 883–4

[41] The Greek *christos* and the Hebrew *messiah* are synonymous: both mean 'the anointed one.' Erasmus means he could have charged Luther with using a mere tautology in his analogy.

[42] *Adagia* I ii 63 (δὶς διὰ πασῶν has been transliterated into the Roman alphabet).

[43] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 671:28–33 / LW 33 118.

precept. Why is it surprising that in the first place Sirach mentions what actually happened first? God created mankind with a will that was free to do good or evil; soon he propounded a law that taught them what they should seek for and what they should avoid, and he encouraged them to choose the good by promising a reward and deterred them from evil by threatening punishment. What if God had not prescribed any law to mankind after he created them? Would that mean they lack free will? We do not read that any law was prescribed for the angels, and yet by free will some rebelled, some stood firm. Although there is nothing obscure or absurd here, still Luther brings forth this new interpretation just as if he were driven to it by ineluctable necessity, an explanation never dreamed of by anyone up to now, so difficult and distorted that even common sense immediately rejects it. Indeed, this whole passage by Luther is so flaccid and feeble that even as he wrote it he did not seem to like it. Marcus Callidius was once criticized for banal delivery of a shocking tale, and Cicero said to him: 'If you were not making it up you would not deliver it thus,'[44] and 'If it were true would you speak of it thus?'[45] Here the same thing immediately occurs to the reader: if you were not making it up, Luther, you would not argue for it thus.

Furthermore, it will not be irrelevant to present Luther's own words, since many persons are perhaps unable to read his book, which has been placed under interdict by the princes. The passage reads as follows:

> First Sirach says, 'God established mankind from the beginning.' Here he is speaking about the creation of mankind, nor does he say anything yet about free will or precepts. He goes on: 'and God left him in the hand of his own counsel.' What do we have here? Do these words add free will? But even here there is no mention of precepts, for which free will is required, nor do we read anything about such a thing in the creation of mankind. If therefore 'the hand of his counsel' means anything, it means that in Genesis 1 and 2 mankind was established as the lord of things, to rule over them freely, as Moses says: 'Let us make mankind to have power over the fish of the sea.' No more than this can be evinced from these words. For in that area mankind can exercise its own choice about things subject to it. Finally Sirach calls it the counsel of mankind as distinct from the counsel of God. But after that, once he has said that mankind is established and left in the hand of its own counsel, he goes on to say: 'God added commands and precepts.' To what did

* * * * *

[44] *Brutus* 278

[45] Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* 11.3.155

> he add them? Surely to the choice and counsel of mankind over and above that human lordship established over other things. By these precepts he eliminated lordship over one part of the creation, namely the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and instead he willed mankind not to be free. But, having added the precepts, Sirach then came to mankind's choice with regard to God and the things of God: 'If you should wish to keep the commandments, they will keep you.'[46]

Thus far I have reported the words of Luther. Doesn't their feebleness immediately prove that he is not saying what he really thinks, except in so far as he set out to reject whatever was said in *A Discussion*? 'Here he is speaking about the creation of mankind.' 'Even here there is no mention of precepts, for which free will is required.' 'He delivers lordship over the things living on earth.' 'If "the hand of counsel" means anything.' Luther even doubts whether these words mean anything at all! 'And God added commands and precepts,' he says, 'namely to counsel and free will.' What else but as the matter for free will to work upon? Later Luther brings in a comparison concerning the decrees of the pope,[47] which eliminate our free will. Finally Luther says, 'If these things are clear,' even though earlier he had asserted that no other meaning could be elicited from these words. If they are not, he sticks to his negative meaning until we prove a different one, which he calls 'difficult and forced.'[48] What iron could be harder than Luther's interpretation, what ice could be colder? And still he has the effrontery to dare to say that from these words, 'he left him in the hand of his own counsel,' nothing can be evinced except that lordship over earthly things was delivered to mankind.

Here I would accomplish nothing if I brought up the interpretations of the ancients, no matter how approved they might be, for he would use his right to reject them. But what if I can show from the passage itself that Luther's interpretation does not stand up? For in that place Sirach is opposing those who blame their sins on God the creator, who made mankind such as it is. For this text is preceded by these words: 'Do not say, "Because of God it is deficient" (or rather "I am deficient" or "I have gone wrong," for the Greek is ἀπέστην), for you should not do what he hates. Do not say, "he has deceived me" (that is, "seduced," for the Greek is ἐπλάνησεν), for he has no need of wicked men. The Lord hates all execrable wrongdoing

* * * * *

---

[46] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 671:28–672:6 / LW 33 118

[47] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 672:15–16 / LW 33 119

[48] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 672:15–29 / LW 33 119

and those who fear him will not love it.' There follows immediately: 'God established man from the beginning and he left him in the hand of his own counsel.'[49] How neatly Luther's distortion dovetails with these words! Do not make God the source of evil, for he hates everything evil; but when he first created mankind, he gave it lordship over the lower things in this world, so that man could decide what he wished about them! Isn't Ecclesiasticus rather arguing that if a person sins he should blame himself, not God, who created man with free will? And lest man should claim ignorance of the divine will as a pretext, God added commandments to the light of nature. Not content with that he encouraged good behaviour by the highest reward, namely life, and he discouraged the opposite by the extreme punishment, namely death. Now Augustine, when he cites this passage, sometimes adds 'he created mankind righteous'; I do not know where he took this from, though it is not out of keeping with the meaning.[50]

I will not examine Luther's attribution of free will to mankind in administering things beneath him, although elsewhere he teaches in an unqualified way that all things are done out of absolute necessity, and as the cause of this he gives God's infallible foreknowledge and God's omnipotent will. But these also take away the angels' free will and reduce everything to necessity.[51] If God's infallible foreknowledge and immutable will are the reason that mankind has no free will, then since this knowledge and will embrace all things in the universe, from the least to the greatest, even the smallest matters would not be subject to mankind's free will, perhaps not even to God, if we give any credence to Luther's argumentation. And then he talks as if mankind could not sin in the use of things beneath him. Moreover, he imagines that there would have been no place for free will if a law restraining the right of lordship had not come to pass, as if Adam were not subject to natural law when he was created. For this precept of God, 'From the tree which is in the middle of paradise you shall not eat,'[52] has the character of a ceremonial law. For it would not have been a sin to eat of any tree whatsoever if God had not forbidden it.

* * * * *

---

[49] Ecclus 15:11–14

[50] The phrase 'he created mankind righteous' (*creavit hominem rectum*) is Eccles 7:30, but Augustine seems never to have associated it with Ecclus 15:14–18 (to judge from searches of the database of *Patrologia Latina*). But pseudo-Augustine does associate a similar text (Wisd 1:14) with Eccles 15:21 in *Hypognosticon* 6.7.11 PL 45 1663.

[51] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 718:20–719:3 / LW 33 189–90

[52] Gen 2:17

Furthermore, Luther manages his argument as if God's precepts took free will away from mankind even before the fall of Adam – which is far from the case. Though we might grant that those who are not yet liberated (to use the language of Augustine) cannot by means of free will avoid evil or pursue what is good, nevertheless no one ever denied that Adam could have persisted in his rectitude by means of free will if he had so wished. But Luther is deceived, or rather he deceives, by a verbal ambiguity. For as we sometimes apply the word 'may' to what we are able to do, sometimes to what we are rightly able to do, so too we sometimes apply the words 'free' or 'unhindered' to what it is in our power to do or not to do, and sometimes we say we are not free to do something that cannot be done without injuring someone. Thus a tyrant is free to kill an innocent person, though he is not free to do so under the law; and someone who has sworn loyalty to a friend can deceive him, but his deed cannot be said to be irreproachable. And so the free will that we are discussing, which is seated in mankind's will, is not excluded by a precept. For a precept does not make it impossible for us to will what is forbidden, but it does make it impossible for us to do so without doing wrong. In fact, after the precept had been laid down, Adam not only willed what it forbade but also performed the deed. And so what Luther drags in here about the freedom of lordship is completely foreign to the argument. For the freedom of lordship is a right; when it is limited it takes away nothing from free will, which only transgression can diminish, or rather impair.

On top of that, even though Luther so often eliminates free will because of grace, which helps mankind – for this is the way he teaches us to reason: helping grace is present, therefore there is no free will; free will exists, therefore grace is nothing – nevertheless here he attributes to mankind not only free will, but even dominion and free lordship in matters beneath him. So too he grants that in these matters God also cooperates with mankind; and earlier he went even further by granting that here too all things are done at God's pleasure. If such a state of affairs does not impair free will in lower concerns, why does it do so in higher affairs? Moreover, how can the words 'dominion' and 'free lordship' agree with what he teaches elsewhere, that mankind has no free will, not even so much as to pick up a straw from the ground?[53] But I can guess why he makes this recantation.[54] He cannot get rid of papal decrees without foisting these two dominions upon us: one with respect to lower things, of which the gospel

* * * * *

[53] See *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 193–4 and n524.

[54] *Adagia* I ix 59

left us the free use – a liberty which the decrees of the church attempt to eliminate;[55] the other is God's dominion, in which mankind is taken and led not by his own choice but by God's. Thus he also distinguished earlier between the counsel of God and that of mankind.[56] And this is the man who so often ridicules the distinctions of the sophists! But does Luther interpret this passage as applying properly to man right after his creation or generally to everyone? If the former, how can he have the effrontery to deny him free will? If it concerns all of fallen mankind, what dominion does he leave them since, according to his own judgment, they have entirely lost free will through sin? Indeed I think Ecclesiasticus was mostly talking about fallen men who blame God for their guilt. On the contrary, Sirach blames free will; but if, according to Luther, there is no such thing in the whole world, Sirach is talking nonsense.[57] Therefore even in fallen mankind free will exists in some manner; because of it, according to Augustine, fallen men are judged.[58]

And so we have shown how worthless Luther's interpretation is, not by the authority of the ancient, orthodox Fathers, which he accepts only when it suits him, but from the context of the passage itself. Of course, he calls the meaning he proposes quite sound and persists in his denial until we can prove our 'difficult and forced' interpretation. Everywhere he challenges us to produce scriptural evidence. But how can you overcome someone with Scripture if he will accept no one's interpretation except his own? But who gave him this marvellous right to reject whatever has been decided either by the orthodox Fathers or by the leaders of the church or by councils and to assert whatever he finds convenient at the moment? Let him give up this tyrannical right or permit us in turn to reject his interpretations. For what proof does he demand that is stronger than one taken from the context itself, like the one I have just given? And now look at this outrageous claim of his: he says that this meaning, which up till now was never unacceptable to any Christian and met with the approval of the Doctors of the church (and Augustine among them), is inconsistent with Scripture as a whole and that this one passage is being distorted to assert free will, whereas actually there are innumerable proof-texts which have been propounded not by me but by St Augustine, Ambrose, Bernard, Irenaeus, Origen, Jerome, and

* * * * *

[55] That is, according to Luther, mankind's free dominion over things beneath him is illegitimately curtailed by papal decrees. See n47 above.

[56] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 671:38–9 / LW 33 118

[57] *Adagia* I iv 70

[58] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 2.3 PL 44 883

Hilary in order to establish free will. This, then, is Luther's first triumph against *A Discussion*.

[*The use of conditional assertions*]

But if anyone should think such arguments are not very clear, Luther has another crack he can slip through.[59] He finds help in the feeble distinctions made by the sophists between indicative and subjunctive verbs and between categorical and hypothetical statements. 'A conditional proposition' he says, 'does not assert anything.' He adds an example worthy of his basic principle: 'If the devil is God, he is rightly adored; if an ass flies, an ass has wings; if free will exists, grace is nothing.'[60] With such foolish blasphemies he plays the clown in a serious matter; 'if the devil is God' are sacrilegious words which no pious person should pronounce even as a joke. It would be inept to bring up here forms of speech in which conditional language asserts something. For such forms assert something when spoken by someone taking an oath, or someone reaching a conclusion by means of impossibilities or absurdities or even an admitted fact, or someone pointing out something according to what is commonly understood. 'May I perish if I have anything that belongs to you.' Here 'if' does not merely affirm; it even swears. And 'If princes are not bound by the laws of God, they do with impunity whatever they wish.' But it is absurd to say that princes are not bound by the laws of God; therefore they do not sin with impunity. Of this sort are those clauses of Luther about God or an ass, which fit very neatly with what he adds: 'If free will exists, there is no grace.'[61] It would have been more fitting to say that if Luther is the Holy Spirit, it would be wicked not to believe him. Wouldn't it be a fine piece of reasoning to say that if I am free to open or shut my eyes, the sun doesn't exist?

No more apposite are those analogies he brings up: 'If someone said to a blind man, "If you wish to see, you will find a treasure" or to a deaf man, "if you wish to hear, I will tell you a good story."' Rather this is what should be said to someone with hearing: 'If you wish to listen, I will tell you something useful; if you do not wish to do so, do not later put the

* * * * *

[59] *Adagia* III ii 75

[60] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 672:32–5 / LW 33 119–20

[61] The phrase 'very neatly' is ironical. Luther's first two examples are as absurd as the sentence about princes, and they are not at all congruous with the third example about free will. More congruous would be the scornful example Erasmus gives about Luther and the Holy Spirit.

blame on me.' Likewise: 'If you wish to look with your eyes, you will see what you want; if not, blame yourself for not seeing.' These analogies apply to free will as it was first created and as it has been freed by grace. For the grace of God does not exclude free will but rather helps it, just as a bright light striking the eyes drives away drowsiness so that the rheum is dispersed and the sight becomes clear. But what about those who have not yet been liberated? If we listen to the scholastics, they too are able, through the vestiges of free will, to advance to the gift of grace. If we do not listen to them, then such persons can be aroused by God's precepts, threats, and promises, and by similar methods, so that when they understand both that their will is turned away and that their powers are unequal to the task, they beg for the grace of God.[62] I am talking about those who have not arrived at the lower depths of evil where the habit of sinning has in some way been turned into second nature. This is the opinion of Augustine.[63]

But to return to the matter at hand: in these two ways it is incontrovertible that a conditional clause states something, in spite of the laws of the sophists. It does so likewise when we reason from something so obvious that it cannot be denied, as, for example, 'If God is mind, he should be worshipped most of all by purity of mind.'[64] Finally, we gather something from a conditional clause according to common sense, as, for example, if a guarantor says to a seller, 'You can sell the farm to a suitable buyer, if he wishes.' Here we understand that the guarantor has sufficient funds and that he is there to pay for the buyer, if the buyer wishes. But here, in a sophistical matter, Luther plays the sophist twice over. For when the dialecticians say that that a conditional clause makes no statement, that does not apply to any signification whatever but to what is being expressed.[65] It is one thing that is being explained, and something else is gathered from it according to common sense. For example, if someone says, 'If you wish, you can turn out to be a learned man,' he is not affirming that the person does so wish, but we gather from it that the person is bright and intelligent. Thus when someone promises, 'If you carry out this business in good faith, I will consider you one of my closest friends,' he is not affirming that the person will carry out the assignment with good faith, but he indicates

* * * * *

[62] Augustine *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 3.5 PL 44 885, 15.31 PL 44 899

[63] Augustine *Contra secundam Iuliani responsionem imperfectum opus* 6.41 PL 45 1605

[64] Cf John 4:24.

[65] That is, dialecticians do not mean that the whole conditional sentence makes no statement at all but only that the conditional clause ('what is being expressed') does not say whether or not the action it expresses will occur.

that he thinks the person can perform it. If daily speech among men is full of such forms of speech, what is the point of Luther's bringing us a fallacy from schoolboys so as to distort the meaning of the whole Bible?

[*The value of ordinary human speech in theology*]

He has a fine laugh here because I have recourse to ordinary human speech, and he imagines he has found a magnificent field in which he can expatiate and declaim against human wisdom. 'Therefore,' he says, 'what could be more perverse than to measure the affairs and words of God by the usage and affairs of men?'[66] But at the same time where is that common sense which he earlier made the judge of human interpretations?[67] If God deigned to speak to us in human words according to customary, ordinary speech, why is it perverse to investigate his meaning according to the usage of human speech? Certainly this is more tolerable than what Luther does when he examines the meaning of the divine wisdom by the feeble trifles of the sophists: 'if the devil is God,' 'if an ass flies,' 'a conditional clause makes no statement,' and 'something or other leads to the impossible,' and 'the imperative and subjunctive moods say nothing that is true or false.' I agree, these words do not affirm that what they command will occur or not occur, but common sense gathers that it is in the power of the person to do what is commanded, provided only that the one who commands is of sound mind.[68] And here let him not bawl out: therefore free will of itself can fulfil the precept. Aristotle will reply that we can do whatever we can do by means of our friends. The lawyers will say that we do whatever we do with the help of others. If we do it, then we can do it. So far from the truth is it that God's Scripture shies away from common speech and meaning that it even represents God speaking with human beings in a human way, as it were, even though he has no human feelings. Therefore how much more fitting it is to examine it according to these forms of speech than by the childish laws of the sophists?

But if you come at us with the prescriptions of the dialecticians, what good will dialectic do you whenever in Holy Scripture a double negative means nothing different from a single one? When a negative particle placed after a universal word forms a particular proposition, as 'All

* * * * *

---

[66] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 673:16–17 / LW 33 120

[67] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 654:4–5 / LW 33 91

[68] Erasmus paraphrases Luther's assertion that Ecclus 15:16 ('if you will keep the commandments') was not intended to mean that mankind is able to observe them (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 672:30–673:12 / LW 33 119–20).

shall not sleep'?[69] Or again, when a negative particle placed before a universal word does not form a particular proposition, as 'I will not be seen by all flesh'?[70] Likewise, when a particular negative proposition is an exception to a universal affirmative proposition, as 'All have sinned,'[71] whereas neither Christ nor his mother sinned, and when God is said to have created everything, whereas he himself was not created by anyone?[72] Likewise, when something is said by way of hyperbole that would be false if examined by the strict rules of dialectic, as when things that are contemptible are said not to exist? Or again, when out of modesty something is depreciated over and beyond the truth, as when Paul is called 'the least of the apostles'?[73] when by synecdoche the whole is denominated by the part, the effect by the cause, or on the other hand by a metaphor one thing is said but something else is meant? Isn't Holy Scripture full of such forms of speech? And where do these forms come from but ordinary human speech? – and they help us to dig out the meaning of Scripture far more often than the rules of the dialecticians, to say nothing of the sophists. For true dialectic recognizes the peculiarities of the language it is discussing. If it does not know them, it is not dialectic but drivelectic.[74] What about this? Our saviour himself, when he took on human nature, did he not likewise speak ordinary language to us? Is this something I made up? Didn't Luther himself teach that Scripture is to be taken as having its meaning in accordance with common sense and the ordinary manner of speech?[75] Having suddenly changed from that position, he now ridicules an idea that he taught and propounded in this very work and that he does not deny is the principle by which it stands or falls. From this he draws the hyperbolical conclusion that Erasmus thinks of God only in a human way.[76] We have subtle doctors and holy, irrefragable, and seraphic doctors. What is left but to call this man the

* * * * *

[69] That is, the phrase does not mean that everyone will not go to sleep but that not everyone (that is some persons) shall not sleep. This is Erasmus' translation of 1 Cor 15:51 in his *Novum Testamentum*.

[70] That is, the saying does not mean that God will be seen by some (but not all) but rather that all will not see him; cf Isa 40:5 and Luke 3:6.

[71] Cf Rom 3:23.

[72] Technically 'everything' would include God himself.

[73] 1 Cor 15:9

[74] Latin *mataeolectica*. Erasmus coins the word from Greek roots: *μάταιος* means 'idle,' 'foolish.'

[75] See n67 above.

[76] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 673:16–18 / LW 33 120

hyperbolical doctor? – certainly he is no less abusive than Hyperbolus the Athenian![77]

According to him, 'Whoever says "If you do this, I will give you a reward," does not always mean that the person can do what he is being encouraged to do. Thus parents command an infant to come to them so that, when it can't do it, it is forced to beg for the hand of the person who encouraged it to come.'[78] But at the same time, has he completely forgotten his teaching that all of God's precepts are absolutely impossible to keep, not only by wicked persons but also by those who are justified by faith and aided by grace? Now let us grant that sometimes parents in a playful way will call a child to them when they know it cannot walk. But wouldn't a person seem absurd and quite mad if he spent whole days calling out to an infant, 'get up, hurry over there, come back here, pick up this, bring that here,' coaxing the child to get it to do so, threatening it if it does not, scolding and beating it because it does not do so? But God's Scripture does almost nothing else throughout whole books. And no mother is so absurd as to encourage an infant to fly. There exists a natural ability to speak and walk, just as certain seeds of piety are inherent in mankind's corrupt nature. And this encouragement by the parents is not entirely without effect: when a child is commanded to speak it opens its mouth, it stammers and utters unclear words; if someone commands it to come to him, it moves its legs, throws its arms out, and indicates with its whole face that it is trying to do what is commanded. And parents do not do this so that the child understands it cannot do so but so that it gradually applies its inborn ability to the task; if its attempts are unsuccessful, its mother helps it. We are treated the same way, with Scripture on one side of us and grace on the other. The same response applies to a physician. Although there might be one who would sometimes prescribe not to heal the disease but to reveal it, would anyone put up with a physician who attended a sick person for days on end prescribing now this, now that, beseeching, frightening, encouraging, exhorting – and proclaimed that he was doing this for no other reason than to make the sick person understand that he was suffering from a very serious disease, of which he could not be relieved except by the beneficence of the physician?[79] Now, though there might be some prince who

* * * * *

[77] A notorious demagogue of the late fifth century BCE; see Cicero *Brutus* 62.224 and *De republica* 4.11.

[78] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 673:20–3 / LW 33 120

[79] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 673:23–6 / LW 33 120–1

would impose some law or other on his citizens not because he thinks they should keep it but to make them more liable to punishment by him, what could be more monstrous than for him to impose innumerable laws day after day, offering great rewards to encourage compliance with them, using harsh punishments to make people afraid to violate them, and for him to do this for no other reason than to make his people understand that they cannot comply with even the slightest of the laws he imposes?

And Luther is so proud of this absolutely stupid fabrication that he utterly denies that God has any more appropriate method to put down human arrogance. If a person can write this with such great assurance, wouldn't you say that he must be privy to God's inmost secrets? God has many resources and is not limited to a single method of opposing our pride. Not infrequently affliction makes us hear and understand, and God has no more weighty device to bring human pride low than that the very Son of God became man and suffered the utmost punishment for us. This is the heavily fortified citadel where Luther seeks to defend himself. But who even so much as dreamed what he asserts? Paul says, 'Through the Law comes knowledge of sin.'[80] But I will soon show that Holy Scripture manifests many other uses of the Law and that a law that prescribes something which cannot be done at all or does not pertain to any action in our lives does not deserve to be called a law. I have shown that knowledge without grace is pointless and that the very fact that a sinner begs for grace is due to grace. Otherwise knowledge of sin is followed by either despair or presumption, not by a plea for heavenly assistance. Finally, what physician is so inhumane as to order prescriptions that only inform the sick person of his disease, and to do this to both friends and enemies, taking delight in scoffing at everyone? For that is how Luther makes God treat all mortals who ever were or are or will be, by professing that there is no precept so easy that it is at all possible even for saints to keep it; indeed – what is even harsher – he asserts that whatever grace itself works in those justified by grace is a sin. And these dreams, which like a spider he has spun out of his brain,[81] he croaks at us as if they were oracular, demanding that by comparison with them we take as mere foolishness the judgment of all the ancient, orthodox Fathers and the whole Catholic church. But more on this point elsewhere.[82]

* * * * *

---

[80] Rom 3:20

[81] Cf *Adagia* I iv 67 and IV iii 89.

[82] See for example 463, 484, 678, 714 below; cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 769–71 / LW 33 266–70.

[*Are divine precepts issued to show they cannot be observed?*]

Luther objects that I make a particular proposition into a universal one,[83] as if I denied that a conditional proposition is ever used except when it means that the condition can be fulfilled. Indeed I said that in common, ordinary speech conditional clauses are taken so, especially in laws: 'If you administer the praetorship in good faith, I will elevate you to the consulate; if not, I will exile you to the islands.' In fact Luther is the one who makes a particular proposition most universal, for he wants all of God's precepts to be laid down not so that everyone can keep them but so that we can understand that they cannot be kept, whereas both Testaments are full of precepts, exhortations, dissuasions, terrible threats, and enticing promises. But he interprets law universally with all its appurtenances, making no distinctions among the various parts of law, between very easy or very difficult parts of it, between law with the addition of grace or lacking it, between a perverse, satanic person and one whose will is pious. And let him not shout that I am misrepresenting him about these points, unless he disavows his teaching that a just man sins in every deed, no matter how good. If there is any exception to common usage, the case of someone who defends himself by the general custom is more probable than that of someone who relies on the exception. An exception to a well-known general usage requires a great deal of proof. Let us grant that God commands some things that exceed human abilities, such as to take up the cross, and perhaps the command that Abraham should kill his first-born son. Does that make it immediately appropriate to interpret all precepts, threats, and promises as if they came from someone scoffing at us and showing us our weakness? Some commands are quite easy, and some are also kept by wicked men who do not steal, kill, blaspheme God, or insult their fathers or mothers out of fear of being punished.

[*The meaning of Romans 3:20: 'Through the Law comes knowledge of sin'*]

For what Paul says about the Law giving knowledge of sin will be examined elsewhere.[84] But in fact I think it well advised here in passing to drive Luther from this citadel, since this is the single principal weapon with which he fights against those who attribute anything to free will or to human merits. Therefore let us shake[85] it out of his hand once and for all, so that we do

* * * * *

[83] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 673:28–33 / LW 33 121

[84] See 362–7 below; cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 757–63 / LW 33 247–57.

[85] Erasmus uses the same Latin word, *excutere*, to express both meanings: 'will be examined' and 'let us shake.'

not hear the same things so often without retaliating. First, therefore, we will take it as established that the apostle Paul is dealing there with gentiles and Jews, but especially with the Jews, in order to declare that the grace which is offered to everyone through the gospel without discriminating against anyone is necessary to everyone, since the gentiles would not have known God by philosophy and the law of nature – and if they did know him they gave their preference to created things over their creator – and since it is clear that the Jews were not justified by the works of the Law but in fact the Law gave them the occasion to sin more gravely. For there may be some sins that the law of nature does not indicate to everyone, such, perhaps, as a harmless coveting of what belongs to someone else. Since the law of Moses reveals that these things are sins, the conscience of a Jew has a heavier burden to bear. Of this sort also are almost all the ceremonial observances: for the law of nature could not believe that it is a sin to eat pork, nor indeed would it be one if the Law had not forbidden it. But it was preposterous for the Jews to keep the Law by punctiliously observing circumcision, choice of foods, the sabbath, not eating carrion, days of the new moon, and other things of this sort, all the while neglecting the heart of the Law, the love of God and neighbour. But most of all Paul strikes a blow at philosophers among the gentiles, at the Pharisees and Scribes among the Jews, since the one group was proud and the other offered most resistance to the gospel. For those wise gentiles scorned the folly of the cross; and the cross, which calls to repentance, offended the Pharisees, who were puffed up with a false belief that they were just. Yet he bludgeons down both groups while at the same time soothing and giving hope to both. In the first chapter he strikes down the proud crests of the gentiles, saying: 'so that they have no excuse.' He deflates the Jews in the next chapter: 'But if you are called a Jew, etc.' On the other hand, he raises the spirits of the gentiles in this passage: 'For since the gentiles, who did not have the Law, did by nature the things that belong to the Law, etc.' He heartens the Jews in the third chapter: 'Then what advantage does the Jew have?' To convict the gentiles he does not use the testimony of Scripture, because their wickedness was out in the open, namely their idolatry and the depravity of their wicked lusts, which was also criticized in their own books. To convict the Jews, who considered themselves just, he uses the testimony of the Law: 'No just man can be found, no one who understands and seeks God.' To keep the Jews from distorting these words as if they were written against the gentiles, Paul adds: 'For we know that whatever the Law says, it says it to those under the Law.'[86]

* * * * *

[86] Rom 1:20, 2:17, 2:14, 3:1, 3:10–11, 3:19

Then, as if the Jews had reproved him by saying 'Then the Law was of no use to us,' he says, 'It was of use but not to justify: it had this use, to make your sin so evident that you could not pretend not to see it.' For in the Greek it is not γνῶσις, which means 'knowledge,' but rather ἐπίγνωσις, which means 'acknowledgment.'[87] For if a person knows something, he can overlook it and pretend it is not so; if he acknowledges it, he admits that it exists. For the Law, accusing (as it were) the conscience of the sinner, does not allow him to pretend his vice does not exist. Therefore there is no reason for a Jew to be vainglorious about the Law, since his own wickedness is all the more evident because of it. Now it is clear that the reproaches he levels at the gentiles in the first chapter do not apply to each and every pagan, for there were some who were exempt from wicked lusts and other horrible deeds, for when he enumerates many of them in 1 Cor 6[:11] he adds: 'Certain among you were such sinners' – that is, 'some'; he does not say 'all.' Nor does he apply to all the Jews such sayings as 'not seeking for God,' 'the venom of asps beneath their lips,' 'their feet run swiftly to shed blood,'[88] whereas many in Holy Scripture are honoured by the designations 'just' and 'God-fearing.' Indeed, even among those who did not earn the honour of such a designation, in the eyes either of God or of men, there were many who were not entirely lacking in the fear of God and did not hasten to shed blood and did not carry the venom of asps beneath their lips. These things are spoken generally, especially against the Jews, because many of them were such, as they made clear when they condemned Christ, for the high priests, elders, Scribes, Pharisees, and the people were of one mind in that wicked deed.

And then the interpreters inquire about what law Paul is talking about here, since he uses this word variously in this very epistle. But it is sufficiently clear that what he mentions in this passage is the Mosaic law. But we must ask what part of the Law he is talking about. It seems to me that he is talking about the grosser part, which prescribes ceremonial rules and forbids obvious crimes, which are also punished by human laws. For he mentions circumcision, a word he uses to include all the ceremonial rules. And among the sins he reports these: 'You proclaim no one should steal and you steal; you say no one should commit adultery and you commit adultery; you abominate idols and you commit sacrilege.' Did all the Jews do these things? Even today not all do so. Therefore, by observing these things according to the letter they claimed justice for themselves, so that they rejected the grace of the gospel as unnecessary or they denied that it

* * * * *

[87] The second Greek word is the one used in Rom 3:20.

[88] Rom 3:11, 13, 15

LB X 1347E

was sufficient without the aid of the Law. Again, in what follows he seems to take the works of the Law to mean circumcision and other ceremonies. 'For we think,' he says, 'that a person is justified by faith without the works of the Law.' Otherwise, if you posit that the work of the Law is to avoid murder, sacrilege, adultery, and perjury, and likewise to love God above all things and your neighbour as yourself, without these faith justifies no one – indeed, without these faith is dead, not to say deadly, if in fact it exists at all. This is consistent with what he says in chapter 4 [verses 9–12] concerning Abraham, who earned through faith the praise of being called just, even when he was not yet circumcised. For the gospel does not tolerate anyone who does not abstain from theft and adultery. It should also be set down that here he is not talking about the entire life of Christians but about those pagans and Jews who are coming to be baptized. To both groups in common he says: 'All have sinned and lack the glory of God,' not because all have committed the crimes he mentioned above, but because none has that full and evangelical justice which renders us just in the eyes of God. For the gospel distinguishes the justice of the Pharisees from that of the gospel, just as the Apostle here distinguishes the justice of mankind from the justice of God: 'Now, however, justice has been revealed without the Law' – but he adds 'the justice of God,' and shortly afterwards 'the justice of God, however, through faith in Jesus Christ.'[89] It is incontrovertible that not even the Jews can acquire this justice except by the gift of faith in Christ. That is why Paul says that 'the justice of God is now revealed,' signifying that it had once been with both the gentiles and the Jews but hidden, as it were; now, however, it is poured out more fully and openly upon all the nations of the world.

We should also consider against whom Paul is bringing up these points, namely against Jews who were headstrong and took pleasure from the letter of the Law. Undercutting their empty boasts, he says that the Law contributes nothing but recognition of sin, that is, evidence of damnation. For the single most important key is to observe what Scripture is dealing with, with whom it is dealing, on what occasion it is speaking, what its intention is. In this respect Paul has a special peculiarity: he usually employs every resource he can to accomplish his purpose, not out of any malicious or clever ingenuity but out of a loving and eager desire for the salvation of mankind. He encourages, he exaggerates, he wounds, he soothes, he keeps silence about some things, other things he puts off; this skill is a matter of

* * * * *

[89] Rom 2:21–2, 3:28, 3:23, 3:21–2

charity, not of craftiness. And so if anyone punctiliously overemphasizes words and syllables in his epistles, he will perpetrate many absurdities. Thus, when Paul takes aim at the haughty and supercilious Jews, saying that the Law does not confer justice on such persons in the eyes of God, Luther distorts this to mean that the whole Law – with all its precepts, even those that command faith, piety, and charity, coupled with exhortations, threats, imprecations, reproaches, flattery, promises, expostulations, which are plentiful everywhere in all of Scripture – accomplishes no more than to make mankind know that it can fulfil nothing that is commanded, even in the presence of grace. I too confess that keeping the Law without grace was not enough to gain true justice for the Jews. But it does not follow from this that the Law can do nothing but show that sin is unavoidable. For the reason that the Law reveals sin is so that it may be avoided, and grace is available to anyone who wants to avoid it – now more abundantly to be sure, but it was also there for the Jews and gentiles. For according to Chrysostom and other holy Doctors, the Law reveals sin not because of the nature of the Law but because of the depraved will of mankind, who do not wish to obey the Law.[90]

Otherwise, if Paul had meant what Luther interprets him to mean, that the precepts of the Law cannot be kept by anyone and were not given to be kept, he would by no means have said: 'Certainly to those who seek glory and honour and immortality with patient persistence in good works, he will give eternal life.' And again: 'But glory and honour and peace to everyone who does good works, first to the Jew and then to the Greek.' And once more: 'Circumcision does indeed avail, if you observe the Law.'[91] That is, he shows that the Law is not useful except to burden the conscience – but useful for whom? For those who do not keep it, even if they seem to be keeping it partly according to the flesh. But who among the ancient exegetes ever proposed the interpretation proposed by Luther? The drift of the context, he says, makes it clear that this is the sense.[92] But in fact I have already shown that the drift is quite otherwise: that is, it charges both the Jews and the gentiles with wickedness and an inclination to sin, and for that reason, when God considered that the Law was not effective in eliminating human wickedness, he removed the burden of the Law and made grace more abundant, proclaiming to everyone salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, whom the Father sent precisely that he might freely forgive

* * * * *

[90] Chrysostom *Commentarius in epistolam ad Romanos* 7.1 PG 60 443

[91] Rom 2:7, 10, 25

[92] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 671:28–672:29 / LW 33 118–19

the sins of all. But the fact that he here denies that this justice is conferred by the works of the Law does not mean that good works are not required from those who are baptized, but rather it shows that both the gentiles, who were exempt from the Law, and the Jews, who transgressed against it, were to be equally admitted to the grace of baptism, as long as they trust in the promises of the gospel. For the deeds of their former life are not imputed to those who take refuge in the grace of the gospel.

And so, while it is true that sin is recognized through the Law, still what Luther adds does not follow, that the Law does nothing else and was issued for no other reason. Nor, to be sure, is it at all surprising that the Law is said to bring about the knowledge of sin, since human laws also are customarily made precisely to show what is to be avoided, what is to be sought out. For the Law is not designed simply to make known what is right, what is wrong, what is virtuous, or what is vicious, but rather the Law was issued to have an effect on the actions of mankind, just as the knowledge of medicine reveals diseases not only to let people know that they are sick but also so that they may be healed by the help of physicians. But if the whole Law does nothing but bring about the recognition of sin, that is, burden the conscience, what is the meaning of so much praise of the Law in Scripture? 'The law of the Lord is spotless; it converts souls and make little ones wise.' 'How shall a young man keep his course straight? By keeping your word.' And again, 'Your speech also gives me life'; 'Your word is a lantern for my feet and a light on my path.' If it shines ahead, it surely shows something to be done. 'My tongue will proclaim your speech, for all your commandments are justice itself.'[93] On the contrary, Luther cries out that all God's commandments are nothing more than scoffs and mockery of the weakness and stubbornness of mankind. But in the first psalm [verse 3] something quite different from a condemning conscience is promised to those who meditate on the Law. It says, 'He will be like a tree which is planted beside falling waters, etc.' When feet and walking are mentioned, action according to the Law is meant. But for such people as Paul is dealing with in that place the Law is nothing more than being convicted by a bad conscience. 'To the wise man,' however, as Solomon says, 'the Law is a fountain of life so that he may escape the downfall of death.' Again, the same writer says in [Proverbs] chapter 6: 'Because your commandment is a lantern, and the Law a light, and the reproof of instruction is a way of life to guard you against an evil woman, etc.'[94] On the contrary, Luther makes it a fountain

* * * * *

[93] Pss 18:8, 118:9, 50, 105, 172
[94] Prov 13:14, 6:23–4

of despair. But when Paul, in Galatians 3[:23–4], is treating the same subject as here and is showing the usefulness of the Law, he says: 'The Law was our tutor in Christ' – or better 'towards Christ' – 'so that we might be justified through faith. But before faith came, we were sheltered under the Law, hemmed in in preparation for the faith which was to be revealed.' Is a tutor of no other use to a child than to let him know that he sins? Does he not rather direct the child who does not yet see for himself what is to be sought out and is not yet led by a love of what is right? Does he not keep the child from what is base by means of shame or fear, lest he become so thoroughly spoiled that he will not learn from philosophers or listen to his father's admonitions? Therefore the single aim of God's Law was the avoidance of baseness and the pursuit of honourable conduct, but the variety of the human mind was the reason that the Law had various effects in various people. For the good and the wise it was a fountain of life. For the weak it was a guard and a sort of railing to keep them from falling into the abyss of wickedness because their fear of sinning had been removed. For those who were simply ignorant it was a lantern shining ahead on the path of action. But for those who were stubborn and swollen with malice and pride, it was a torturer, forcing upon them the foulness of their crimes and extorting a reluctant confession from them. What occurs with human laws also comes about with divine laws: the aim is identical; the outcome, various. If you eliminate the aim of a law, you eliminate the law, both its nature and its name.

Another point is noted by orthodox interpreters: he does not say 'From the Law comes knowledge of sin' but rather 'Through the Law.'[95] Otherwise he would have seemed to be indicting the very nature of the Law because in and of itself, by doing nothing except convicting people of sin, it caused them to be punished. But he said 'through the Law,' meaning that it occasionally happened that the Law, which was given to encourage right action, would increase the damnation of transgressors and that what was made available for attaining to justification would reveal the lack of it. But Paul vindicates the Law, proclaiming that it is good and holy, and he does this by shifting the blame for its evocation of anger back on those who fail to observe it. We should also understand in the same way the text 'But the Law crept in so that sin would abound.'[96] For the Law was not given precisely to make sin abound, but from the viciousness of mankind it followed that what was given as a remedy made the disease more powerful.

* * * * *

---

[95] Rom 3:20; Latin *per legem*

[96] Rom 5:20

Similarly, in Galatians 3[:19] when he is explaining of what use the Law was, he writes: 'Why, then, the Law? It was laid down because of transgression, until the arrival of the seed to whom the promise was made.' Why 'because of transgression'? Is it so that the Law when it is violated would manifest the wickedness of mankind? Or rather so that the good might be made better, the weak safer, so that the bad might sin less grievously, the wicked might be exposed (and if they commit no fewer sins they might at least do less harm), and thus all the people to whom Christ was promised might be protected within the railing of the Law, lest Christ when he came should find no one who can be healed? Although none of them observed the whole Law, nevertheless there were many who, according to the usual estimation, observed it partly. And although they were not perfectly justified, yet they took a step towards evangelical justification. 'But without grace no one observes the Law in a fashion worthy of it.'[97] I grant it. But that grace has been made available to those who perform as well as they can.

Luther has the peculiarity of turning particular or singular propositions into universal ones. Through the Law comes knowledge of sin. Therefore, he says, the whole Law, with all its precepts, threats, rewards, punishments, curses, and blessings, does nothing more, throughout all time, than burden the consciences of all men by the recognition of sin, since there is no precept which anyone can keep.[98] In fact there are many who do not steal, do not commit perjury, do not murder. But he has another piece of sophistry: the fountain of all good works is the love of God, but no one can keep God's commandment to love him with all our heart, all our soul, all our power. If we posit this, the Law is not kept even by someone who keeps it in other respects.[99] The orthodox interpreters deftly untied this knot long ago.[100] How? By pointing out that the hyperbole of the commandment demands the supreme love of God by comparison with other things, so that someone loves God with all his heart, soul, and power if he places God before all created things, even life and death, if a case should arise when he would either have to offend God or suffer death. For the rest, the hyperbole demands that a person make as much progress in loving God as is permitted by the weakness of human nature. Thus in the Gospel 'a disciple' is

* * * * *

[97] Not a direct quotation from Luther but a summary objection based on the whole drift of his argument

[98] Cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 677:7–16 / LW 33 127.

[99] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 681:12–34 / LW 33 133–4

[100] See, for example, Origen *Commentarii in Matthaeum* PG 13 1604 and Aquinas *Catena aurea in Matthaeum* 22.4.

called 'perfect' if he is 'as his master is,'[101] not because anyone is equal to Christ but because he practises the same kind of virtue. In the same place they are commanded to be 'perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect,'[102] not because any man or even angel approaches the perfection of God, but because he reflects the Father in some fashion, namely in doing good to both friends and enemies. For the prophet did not lie when he said: 'With my whole heart I have sought you lest you drive me away from your commandments.'[103] But he is lying if Luther is telling the truth. In 3 Kings 8[:23] Solomon prays thus: 'Lord God, who keep your covenant and preserve your mercy for your servants if they walk before you with their whole heart.' If there are none who do, for whom is Solomon praying? I don't imagine Hezekiah was lying when he said: 'I implore you, Lord, remember, I beg you, how I walked before you in truth and with a perfect heart.'[104] And if no commandment can be kept, why do the Holy Books praise some who failed here and there but were otherwise pious? And if Luther assails us with words like the sophists, we will do the same to him. Therefore we ask what sort of dialectic it is that draws from the premise 'through the Law comes knowledge of sin' the conclusion 'therefore it does nothing else'? As if to say 'lettuce loosens the bowels; therefore it provides no nourishment.' How can the premise 'a physician does nothing for this person except to make his suffering worse through recognizing the disease' reasonably lead to the conclusion 'no physician can do anything else for anyone'? If the physician does nothing else, the art of medicine is not at fault but rather the offence of the sick man who does not cooperate with the physician.

And was there ever a tyrant so frivolous or cruel as to make laws for his subjects which would do no more than make the citizenry understand that none of these laws can be kept? Solon made no law concerning parricide. When he was asked why, he replied that he did not suppose that the morals of the citizenry had declined to such wickedness, indicating that the laws have nothing to do with what is not ordinarily done.[105] But they have even less to do with something that cannot be done: thus no law forbids anyone from putting on wings and flying out of the city by night. In the Twelve Tables there was a law that the body of anyone who was indebted

* * * * *

[101] Cf Matt 10:25.

[102] Matt 5:48

[103] Ps 118:10

[104] 4 Kings 20:3

[105] Cicero *Pro Roscio Amerino* 25.70; Erasmus *Apophthegmata* 7, *Solon Salaminus* 7 LB IV 324A

to many creditors and could not pay should be cut up and each creditor should take a portion according to the size of his debt.[106] Interpreters explain that this law had no other purpose than to confirm good faith in borrowing and lending by the horribleness of the punishment, for without such good faith the republic was bound to collapse. In fact there is no case extant where this law was applied. But this was the only law made by the pagans to terrorize, not to give a good example. Luther claims that all the laws of God, together with rewards, punishments, and whatever can draw or entice people to keep the Law, were made by God either to mock or insult mankind, as if a father should tell his child in jest to come to him when he knows the child cannot walk, or as if a king were to insult a headstrong enemy by commanding him to do something which he knows the enemy cannot do. Has he not given us a splendid scheme to impose on almost all of Holy Scripture?

Why, then, is it called the Law if it contributes nothing to the deeds of our life, if it is impossible and hence unfair? Lawyers consider a law invalid if it is not possible or reasonable or fair or useful for the common good. They add that it must be both accepted by common agreement and sanctioned by custom. But if the law of God is such as Luther makes it out to be, then he was pulling the wool over the eyes of the people of Israel,[107] first of all because when Moses imposed the Law he exacted the assent of the people, which was required even more strictly in Deuteronomy 29. For if he had said, 'I give you a law which you will not and cannot observe; it will only reveal the wickedness of your minds,' the people would undoubtedly have rejected such a law, or if they had accepted it, they would not have been upset when it was broken, because it was not given to be observed but only to cause the recognition of sin. In that case, for God to accomplish what he wished, the people had to be deceived by a hidden snare. And the reason Moses cleverly spent so much time in persuading them to keep the Law, in exhorting, promising, frightening them, was to keep them from seeing the trickery. But if the Law was given only to reveal sin, it would have been sufficient to lay down bare commandments; as it is, a good part, indeed the largest part, of the book is devoted to persuading them. But if the recognition of sin is such a necessary thing and could not be achieved except by deceiving mankind and confronting it with the Law, why did Luther reveal this secret now and by exposing the deception make people

* * * * *

[106] See Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 20.1.49 and Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* 3.6.84; cf also *Adagia* I x 24.

[107] *Adagia* I v 52

unwilling to strain to observe the Law, since they know there is no way it can be observed? At least he might have spoken as Moses, the prophets, Christ, and the apostles did, and together with them the Doctors of the church. For they all speak as if our will is at fault if we do not observe the Law.

But let us grant that the Law causes the recognition of sin. What does the recognition of sin lead to? To salvation? No, but rather either to despair or to contempt, if it is not combined with grace. But would it not be much worthier of God to confer the grace to observe the Law before a person comes up against the Law so wretchedly, injuring not only himself but also others? Luther will say: This was pleasing to that will which must be worshipped, not examined. Is Luther, then, the only one who is privy to the secrets of that will? Why then reveal the secret which the Son himself did not reveal, which up till now the church either did not know or did not speak about, the church, which is the spouse of Christ and has his Spirit when he himself is not visibly present? Now if Luther asks us, 'What need is there for free will, which on its own is capable of evil and is incapable of good without grace?' we will reply, 'This was pleasing to the will which must be worshipped,' and this reply is far more probable than the one made by Luther. What problem can be too difficult for him to solve if we permit him, whenever it is convenient, to have recourse to the will which must be worshipped and the God who is not preached?[108] Again, if he should ask, 'What need was there for God to be crucified if the Law justified?' we will reply, 'Since circumcision under the Law took away original sin, since grace justified when it aided the powers of man, what need was there for the gospel?' If he says, 'So that he could increase and extend grace,' I reply, 'He could do that without the death of the Son.' 'This was pleasing,' he will say, 'to the will which must be worshipped.' 'But it was also pleasing to that same will that mankind should submit itself to grace or reject it by means of free will.' Thus whenever we do not have a reason for something or he will not accept our reasons, we will have recourse to the will which must be worshipped. Where does he get the arguments to persuade us of something that is totally absurd, namely that almost all of Scripture deceives us whenever it commands, exhorts, threatens, or reproaches? Not from the decrees of the church, for he scorns them, not from orthodox writers, for he spits in their faces, but from grammarians and sophists. 'Subjunctive, optative, and imperative verbs do not assert anything, because a

* * * * *

[108] See *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 684:27–40 / LW 33 138–9, and cf 411–15 and also 420–1 below.

father jokingly tells his child to come here when it cannot walk, and a rich man mocks a pauper by saying "Give me $5,000" when he knows the beggar has not a penny to his name.' And, to use his own examples, 'This is what the dialecticians say,' he says: '"If the devil is God, he deserves to be worshipped";[109] just so Scripture says, "If you observe the commandments, they will preserve you,"[110] and just so a person accustomed to mocking the misery of others says to a blind man, "If you wish to see, I will show you something you will like very much."' This is the weapon our invincible Achilles relies on most of all for his triumphs; against his power the gates of hell have no force at all.[111] But at the same time what about the gravity of the word of God? what about common sense? or customary practice in human laws? or the word 'law' itself, if it does nothing but reveal sin and stir up wicked desires? Aren't these adamantine reasons to persuade us of something absurd and unheard-of? 'These things,' he says, 'seem absurd to the flesh, but not at all so to the spirit';[112] and at the same time he makes everyone who disagrees with him into flesh and claims the Spirit for himself. He should make this good, not simply proclaim it. As it is, his boastful claim tells us one thing; his writings, stuffed as they are with sneers, snorts, sniping, trickery, boasts, and insults, tell us something else.

[*God as teacher: the spiritual progression of mankind from Law to grace*]
But to finish what I began, what is the reason that Paul here says, 'All have sinned and lack the glory of God'[113] and to the Galatians (chapter 3[:22]), 'Scripture has shut up everything under sin'? I reply that if we interpret 'sin' as a serious offence, that is, mortal sin, Paul is not talking there about individual persons but about individual categories of persons. For there is no nation which is not defiled by very grievous sins. But if there were any which did not lack the glory of God, it would have been the nation of the Jews, which gloried in the privilege of having the Law which was delivered to them by God. But afterwards, when it was also very corrupt, there was nothing left but what Paul says, 'that every mouth may be shut up and the whole world be made subject to God.'[114] And yet among the Jews Christ found some who were innocent of the crimes that are men-

* * * * *

109 *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 672:33–4 / LW 33 119–20
110 Ecclus 15:16
111 Cf Matt 16:18.
112 Cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 652:11–22 / LW 33 88–9.
113 Rom 3:23
114 Rom 3:19

tioned here.[115] But such a small number does not prevent a general statement according to the language of Scripture or even in common, ordinary speech. The wickedness of the gentiles was obvious. But as soon as Paul had taught by means of Scripture that the nation of the Jews was also thoroughly corrupt, he added what I just quoted: 'so that every mouth may be shut up and the whole world may be subject to God,' and then right away he includes all the nations of the world when he says, 'All have sinned and lack the glory of God.'[116] And even those who were considered to be justified were not justified in the eyes of God because they were not free of lesser faults, as he says: 'All flesh is not justified in the eyes of God by the works of the Law.'[117] For God demands a more perfect justice than human weakness can achieve through the commandments of the Law. Accordingly, the burden of the Law was lightened and grace was augmented through the death of Christ;[118] and grace, which before was hidden, as it were, among a few Jews, was poured out more abundantly on the whole world. And so it came about that through the Law we not only have recognition of sin and from recognition punishment and from punishment death but also from grace gratuitously added on we have the remission of sins and the easier observance of the Law. For what one person does in the formation of another, God did in the formation of the ages: there is a progression little by little from what started as imperfect to what is more perfect, from the fleshly, as Paul says, to the spiritual. Elementary instruction, which is dispensed to the uneducated, does not have as its goal merely that the learner should recognize that he doesn't know anything but rather that he should gradually attain to perfect knowledge. And in the meantime, while he is still concerned with elementary knowledge, he is praised or at least tolerated by his instructor, considering his age, until his knowledge becomes more precise. Just so, while the Jews were subject to the Law as a tutor, God took in good part the righteousness, such as it was, which observance of the Law was able to provide. But after the light of the gospel shone forth, after grace was poured out most generously, he required a certain more perfect justice than the Law could provide; but nevertheless the Law gave them this preparation not merely because it revealed sin but also because it prevented the commission of many sins, and thus it advanced to a certain level of justice, just as a tutor when he has fulfilled

* * * * *

---

[115] That is, in Rom 3:10–18

[116] Rom 3:23

[117] Rom 3:20

[118] Cf Rom 3:24.

his duty gives a young man into the charge of a philosopher who will advance his education. Therefore more is demanded of those who can perform hard tasks more easily; that is certainly true in so far as it applies to us, who are the recipients of grace. But as to the times which preceded the preaching of the gospel, I have already shown how manifold were the uses of the Law.

Why, then, does Paul wield against all the Jews without exception scriptural testimony such as 'All have fallen, one and all they have become useless'[119] and other texts he weaves in from other places? I know that some apply here the practice in Holy Scripture of dividing the 'world,' or 'people,' or any other noun indicating a group into two parts, applying to each the general name of both. For example, when John says, 'And the world did not know him,' he seems to say this because the whole world did not know Christ. But that he is not using the word 'world' in this passage to mean worldly emotions, as he does elsewhere – 'You are not of this world'[120] – is made clear by what immediately precedes: 'He was in the world and the world was made by him.'[121] Similarly, in chapter 3[:32] John the Baptist says, 'No one accepts his witness'; but Jesus already had disciples who accepted his witness. Likewise, Isaiah 66[:23]: 'All flesh will come to worship before my face, says the Lord.' This is similar to what is said in Joel 2[:28]: 'Afterwards it will come to pass that I will pour forth my Spirit upon all flesh.' Then again, Psalm 144[:14]: 'The Lord lifts up all who fall down; he raises up those who have been shattered.' Such is that passage in Paul, Philippians 2[:21]: 'All sought what belongs to them, not what belongs to Christ.' And Psalm 13[:3], which is the passage here cited by the Apostle: 'All have fallen, and all have become useless; there is no one who does good, no, not even one.'[122] Those indefinite propositions also seem to have the appearance of generality, like Paul's word: 'We preach Jesus Christ crucified, a scandal indeed to the Jews, but folly to the gentiles.'[123] For he seems to be speaking about all of them, but he means only some. Since there is an enormous number of such instances in the Sacred Books, either we apply the universality to the part to which Scripture means it to apply, or we take it that what applies to some is applied to all by hyperbole. Certainly this method is what I approve for this passage, which can

* * * * *

[119] Ps 13:3; Rom 3:12
[120] John 15:19
[121] John 1:10
[122] Rom 3:12
[123] 1 Cor 1:23

be interpreted as twofold, so that we may consider either the parts of the whole or the individuals which are included in the general term. A city, for example, consists of two kinds of men, clerical and secular. The clerical includes bishops, priests, deacons, etc. The secular comprises the ruler, superintendents, the senate, magistrates, and the ordinary people. So too a kingdom consists of provinces and cities. Therefore, when we say that the whole city is corrupt we do not straightaway mean that all individuals are corrupt, but either that no order of society is upright or that the majority of persons are corrupt. So too we say that a whole house has fallen down if many parts have fallen down so as to render it useless. I think this text also ought to be interpreted in this way: 'Go out to the whole world; preach the gospel to every creature.'[124] None of the apostles travelled over the whole world, though they were ordered to do so.

Such hyperbole was suitable in this passage, where confidence in the Law was to be put down most forcibly and the power of grace was to be emphasized. Thus the whole world is subject to God when it recognizes its sin, when no part of the world is free of sin, and when most mortals have transgressed against the Law of God. Thus all of the Jews are also said to have fallen because among them both the priests and the elders, and the Pharisees, together with the Scribes, and the people had for the most part deviated from true righteousness. It is, in fact, both probable and laid down by learned men that Christ came at the time when the human race, both gentiles and Jews, were at the apogee of their wickedness. That fact is sufficiently clear about the Jews, since they assailed Christ with such unanimity and with such insane persistence, finally putting him to death.

I prefer this figurative explanation to the one which some like better, that is, to refer the universal term 'all' to the aggregate of one part, that is, to all the wicked; and I am moved to do so by two considerations. First, it seems like rather feeble language to say that no one among the wicked is seeking God, for who does not know that the wicked are wicked and the pious, pious? And then this meaning does not exactly contribute to what the Apostle is trying to do here. For he is trying to make all persons give up their trust in what they had relied on before and to draw them to the gospel. But if he distinguished the pious from the wicked, everyone would flatter himself that he should be counted among the pious. But to draw all people away from their futile confidence, he included everyone in a general expression lest the extreme rarity of good persons should lend support to

* * * * *

[124] Mark 16:15

the very numerous crowd of the wicked. But in fact, even they were not so good as to be free from all evil; and those who are truly good permit even a slight fault to be imputed to them as a serious one. With these persons, then, the Apostle had no quarrel; he was struggling with the ranks of the wicked. Now the justice that was sufficient for the salvation of the gentiles and the Jews before the gospel was revealed was no longer sufficient after the ringing trumpet blast of the gospel had sounded throughout the world; for more was required of those who had been given more.[125] And so it came about that those who were justified before, each in his own way, became unjustified if they did not take refuge in the gospel.

It also does not seem necessary to me to bring up original sin to interpret this passage. The sequence of ideas works even if we interpret it as applying to the bad morals and desires of mankind, who reflect our first parents by their transgressions, because the overwhelming majority of mortals before Christ acted in such a way that not only did wickedness reign unpunished in all the nations of the world, but it was also hard to find a just man among the Jews. And there has been no lack of orthodox exegetes who have interpreted this place, together with what is discussed in chapter 5,[126] .as applying to the transgressions of mankind, not to what they call original sin. And the sequence of ideas also fits the rules I have just pointed out. Moreover, what is said in Ephesians 2[:3], 'We were by nature sons of wrath just like the rest,' does not seem to refer to original sin, since Paul there condemns his behaviour while he belonged to Judaism, comparing it with the life of the gentiles. But at that time Paul was freed from that sin by circumcision. And what precedes shows that he means his personal sins: 'Carrying out what our flesh and our notions wished, and we were by nature sons of wrath.' In this passage St Jerome lets us know that the word 'nature' – φύσις in Greek – is ambiguous.[127] For someone can be called evil by nature if his nature is such, or if he was born so, or if he is naturally disposed to wrongdoing. In the first way neither the devil nor any human being is evil in the same way that by nature a dog is flattering, a lion is irascible, a viper is noxious. In the second way mankind can be

* * * * *

---

[125] Cf Luke 12:48.

[126] Rom 5:12–21. For orthodox exegesis of these passages from Romans as applying to the actual sins of mankind rather than to original sin exclusively, see Chrysostom *Commentarius in epistolam ad Romanos* 7.3 PG 60 441–2; Augustine *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistola ad Romanos* 1.13–18 PL 35 2065–6; *Glossa ordinaria* on Rom 3 PL 114 485D.

[127] *Commentariorum in epistolam ad Ephesios libri tres* 1.2 PL 26 468

called evil by nature because it is born with a corrupt nature. In the third way Juvenal said about the Greeks, 'They are a nation of comic actors,'[128] just as if we should say that the Germans are bellicose by nature. In this way all mankind can be called wicked by nature because they are by nature inclined to wickedness. There is a fourth way by which we say that something deeply seated in a person belongs to him by nature; thus those who are miserable in every possible way we call miserable by nature or born to be miserable. And Jerome tells us that in this passage some have translated 'completely' or 'entirely' instead of 'by nature,' and he does not reject that interpretation.[129] Those who avoided the phrase 'by nature' seem to have been afraid that someone might follow the Manichaeans in thinking that there are two natures, one the cause of evil deeds, the other the cause of good deeds. I think that Paul's 'we were the sons of wrath' should be interpreted in the last two ways, either because of the weakness of the body in which we are enclosed or because of our thoroughly corrupt and vicious living, from which we cannot extricate ourselves without God's help. I have discussed the passage in this way not so as to offer strong opposition to the judgment of others, nor so as to take away original sin, which is affirmed with sufficient clarity in other places in Scripture, but rather to wrench this weapon from those who would murder free will by attributing so much to this sin that they make little difference between mankind and Satan.

I have discussed this point somewhat lengthily, my good reader, to avoid hearing Luther crowing his cockadoodledoo at us so often with no retaliation: 'Through the Law comes recognition of sin.' I acknowledge what the Apostle wrote; I reject Luther's interpretation of it. Let him imagine that the Law leads to nothing but the revelation of sin. What is the use of that? To frighten someone into begging help from God. But if he is not in the Spirit, how will he pray, since according to Luther's teaching he would provoke God's wrath by doing so? If he is, why should he not fulfil the Law with the help of the Spirit? But perhaps this point will come up elsewhere;[130] here I think it is sufficient to have touched on it in passing. Now I return to my main task. Let me add this: in that passage Paul uses every kind of artillery against the Jews, a supremely arrogant and stubborn race of men who sought to undermine the grace of the gospel by zeal for the Law. He would have spoken quite differently if he had been born in our time and had heard so much about mere necessity, such game-playing and

* * * * *

[128] Juvenal 3.10

[129] *Commentariorum in epistolam ad Ephesios libri tres* 1.2 PL 26 468

[130] See 395–6 below.

mockery – not because Paul is inconsistent but because discourse should be accommodated to present circumstances and because it makes a great difference how you make your case.

[*Return to interpretation of Ecclesiasticus 15:11–22*]

In discussing our inferences Luther shows his usual skill: he says I argue, 'Whenever God says "do it," "listen," "observe it," "if you listen, if you will it, if you do it," then we can do it freely or else God will be mocking us.'[131] I ask you, where did *A Discussion* make such an argument as 'therefore we can do it freely; if you will it, you can therefore will it freely'? For by 'freely,' if I am not mistaken, Luther means 'without grace.' In fact this was the argument: God would not have kept dinning these things in our ears if there were no free will. These are the words of *A Discussion*: 'Although the passage we have cited from Ecclesiasticus seems to apply particularly to our first parents, still it applies in some fashion to all the posterity of Adam. But it would not apply if we had no power of free will, etc.'[132] Now let Luther go on and recite to us that 'therefore you can do it freely.' There is some middle ground between 'to do it freely' and 'to be completely unable to do it.' The emperor decrees to his subjects that they should all present themselves on a set day with their horses and heavy armour, saying, 'If they do not have the resources to do so, they should request them from me.' Some may not be able to comply out of their own resources, but no one is unable to do so with a grant from the emperor, which will not be denied to anyone. And in fact, the emperor's help is not so readily available to anyone as God's assistance is to a person who is exerting all his strength.

Having laid such a foundation, auspiciously as it seems to him, he throws up to me that probable opinion as if I were pronouncing my decision instead of opposing the opinion of Luther or as if I undertook to defend only the opinion which I call probable. But come, let me respond to this gross misrepresentation. In recounting my position, here as often elsewhere, I am forced to find Luther wanting in good faith. *A Discussion* proposes the probable opinion as follows: 'And so those furthest from Pelagius' position attribute a great deal to grace and almost nothing to free will, though they do not deny it altogether. They say that without particular grace

* * * * *

[131] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 673:34–9 / LW 33 121; this sentence does not give Luther's opinion, but rather his interpretation (or misinterpretation) of Erasmus' argument.

[132] *A Discussion* CWE 76 26

man cannot will the good, can neither make a beginning, nor persevere, nor bring the good to completion without the principal and perpetual help of God's grace. This opinion seems highly probable, for it leaves a person the opportunity of serious moral endeavour, but not of making any claims for his own powers.'[133] These are my own words in *A Discussion*. According to this opinion, a person is not able to will the good, that is, to will it effectively, without grace, or to make progress, or to bring a good action to completion without the principal assistance of grace. When the assistance of grace is said to be 'principal,' the meaning is that free will can also do something to help itself but will be ineffective if grace is lacking. I call it ineffective not because it can do nothing but because it can effect nothing without assistance – since I am dealing with someone who misrepresents what I say. I do not say that this is the only defensible position and that others are to be rejected, but rather I call it probable, nor do I keep silence about why it seems probable. Why, then, does it? Because it leaves effort and striving to mankind, and that undoubtedly happens through free will, but still it leaves him nothing he can ascribe to his own powers. How so? Because the power of free will is not sufficient to achieve salvation without the assistance of grace, and even the fact that free will can do anything is a gift of God. But if Luther contends that this opinion takes away free will, he should take it up with Augustine, Ambrose, and Bernard, who defend this opinion with all their might but nevertheless constantly affirm free will in the same books.[134] If this opinion seems to me probable because it deprives us of any confidence in ourselves without removing free will altogether, it will cease to seem probable if Luther should persuade us that, because it removes our reliance on ourselves, it completely takes away free will.

Now see how Luther finds contradictions where there are none. When I said we cannot will effectively without the assistance of grace, he interprets that to mean simply 'we cannot will,' and to make sure of a hyperbole he changes 'good' into 'any good' and also turns 'cannot will' into 'cannot will freely.' Clearly the statements 'to be able to do nothing at all' and 'to be able simply and freely' are contradictory. But this opposition of words and opinions is not in my *Discussion* but in Luther's distortion of it. It is very difficult to argue with him, because he went wrong at the beginning, where opinions were distinguished, and thus mixes up the argument throughout his whole discourse. Moreover there is so much garrulity, such a heap of

* * * * *

---

[133] *A Discussion* CWE 76 32

[134] See nn6–9, 11 above.

words, sneers, and insults, as could obscure even a subject that is readily understandable. If he asks me whether a person can will good on his own, I reply that according to the opinion of some, which I neither defend nor reject, he not only can will it but also can do it so effectively that at the outset there is no particular grace, but unless grace is added he cannot complete what he began. According to the probable opinion, I reply that he can indeed will but that his volition is useless, like Balaam's in Numbers 23[:10] when he says, 'May my soul die the death of the righteous and may my last hour be like theirs.' Such a wish in certain circumstances often occurs even in wicked persons, but in vain. But effective volition does not happen without the assistance of particular grace. Here Karlstadt will say that God wills in us and that we do nothing.[135] But in fact, our will both acts and is acted upon, at one and the same time: it acts by its natural powers; it is acted upon by the grace which assists it. Then is anything strictly ours in a good deed? I reply, if you mean by ours something for which we are indebted to no one, then nothing is ours in doing good deeds. How so? Because whatever our natural powers are or can do, they had their origin as a gift of God. Therefore can we neither wish for the good nor will it in any way without grace? My drunken *Discussion* has already distinguished the general grace common to the pious and the wicked alike from the grace that justifies or the grace that invites to righteousness. But however often I re-echo these points to Luther, it is like telling a tale to a deaf man,[136] so that he seems to snore away in a slumber deeper than the one he imagines my *Discussion* to be in.

Now to make a grand impression as a dialectician he comes up with an unheard-of piece of sophistry. From those words 'if you will it,' because this is a conditional form of speech, I infer that a person can in some fashion will and not will. For lawyers say that if a condition is added that cannot be executed, it invalidates a contract, as for example if someone should say, 'I will give you this horse if the horse itself says it wishes to be yours.' Therefore, he says, 'Does sweet and bitter flow from the same fountain?'[137] Was Luther sober when he besmirched his paper with such nonsense? Whenever a condition is set down, the thing itself is in doubt or the judgment of the speaker is in doubt, or both. 'I will marry you if you are a virgin.' The fact is certain, but the speaker is in doubt about it. 'I will sell you the farm

* * * * *

[135] See n26 above.

[136] *Adagia* I iv 87

[137] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 674:18 / LW 33 122; Luther is citing James 3:11.

if you pay the money before the beginning of next month.' Here both the fact and the mind of the speaker are in doubt.[138]

But it would be absurd for someone who knew that a person either would not or could not fulfil the condition to proceed with the contract, working out the bargain and providing witnesses, signing papers, giving or receiving earnest-money. 'But when God speaks, his mind cannot be in any doubt.' That does not mean that he commands what simply cannot be done. 'But he knows that some will not will to do so.' The Law is still given generally, to everyone, so that those who obey the Law receive praise and those who refuse to obey it are shown to be worthy of punishment. 'But what if to will and not to will follow from the same expression?' When someone says 'Depart if you wish,' doesn't he leave the person he is talking to free to stay, if he wishes to? Since the same part of our mind seeks what is honourable and flees from the opposite, is it so astounding that to will and not to will should spring from the same source? Don't we use the same rational faculty to prove or to disprove something? Doesn't the same mental power hate and love? To these trifles he adds something I do not understand at all. For it does not fit in this place and seems to be a totally mindless statement. 'Or,' he says, taking *A Discussion* to task, 'are you mocking mankind even more here by saying it can observe things it cannot will or wish for?'[139] I overlook the fact that, just as he added 'freely' before, he here adds 'wish for,' so that he can be sure of being hyperbolical. If you assail me with the same opinion, 'Just as a person can will, so too he can observe the precepts,' he cannot do so effectively without grace, just as he cannot perform what is commanded, but grace tempers its action in such a way that it leaves room for natural powers also. For Luther blunders endlessly on this string:[140] 'He cannot without grace; therefore he simply cannot.'[141]

Similarly, what I say at the end, where I endorse the opinion which seems closest to the truth, he distorts, and he applies it to whatever is scattered throughout the whole argument, which refers now to one opinion, now

* * * * *

[138] That is, the person is in fact either a virgin or not, whereas the condition 'if you pay on time' is indeterminate and the fact has not yet taken place.

[139] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 674:18–19 / LW 33 122. Erasmus' Latin has a period here instead of a question mark; but Luther's Latin has a question mark, which is clearly intended.

[140] Horace *Ars poetica* 356

[141] Not a direct quotation from Luther but rather a summary of his argument

to another. And to this most boastful of men, this passage of his seems even worthy of an ovation:[142] 'Reason,' he says, 'is so trapped by the consequences and words of its wisdom that it does not know what it is saying or what it is talking about, except that it is quite fitting that free will should be defended by such arguments as consume and devour each other, as the Midianites perished by slaughtering one another, etc.'[143] I wonder if this man can ever grow old, since he is always so beautifully full of himself, even when his performance is thoroughly foolish.[144] Reason is not captured by such spiderwebs, but rather the flies of foolish ideas are ensnared;[145] nor are there any reasons here that destroy themselves in mutual slaughter, but in his arguments there is a huge host of armed men born of a serpent who kill each other in mutual slaughter.[146] What does Luther have here except two phrases? But they are bare phrases, whereas I add something to them. 'In the end,' according to him, 'you say that a person cannot will what is good without grace, and here you say he can observe the commandments without grace';[147] such is the interpretation of Luther the know-it-all. These things are more feeble than the games boys play in school: a mouse gnaws the cheese; a mouse is a syllable; therefore a syllable gnaws the cheese.[148] At the same time he never considers that when I handle those scriptural passages with which I oppose him, if I try to wrench from him something that I yield back at the end, a debater has the right to do so.

But he has another terrible weapon ready. 'Ecclesiasticus does not say: "If you have a desire or make an attempt at observance which is not ascribed to your natural powers," but he says as follows: "If you will to observe the commandments, they will preserve you."' Granted. 'Therefore,' Luther says, 'we will infer: "Thus a person can observe the commandments."' I confess it. 'Therefore we attribute to him the complete fullness of power to observe the commandments.' Why so? 'Otherwise Ecclesiasticus would be ridiculing the misery of mankind by ordering them to observe what he knows they cannot observe; and the presence of effort and an attempt would not be enough for him to escape the suspicion of mockery unless he meant that they have the power to observe them.'[149] I reply: Ecclesiasticus means that all have some power; hyperbolical Luther added 'full power' hyperbolically[150] on his own in his usual fashion. There is something in us without which we do not achieve salvation. The conditional part of the commands requires this; the rest God promises from what is his. If the emperor should decree, 'Whoever deserts to my side I will protect from the enemy,' they would not be able to come over unless the emperor gave them the power, nor would the deserters be safe from the enemy unless they themselves were also fighting all the while under the protection of the emperor. What, then, will the deserters attribute to themselves? Or on whom will someone blame his destruction if he did not desert when he was given the opportunity? In this affair will the emperor be said to mock them? When the human will acts to the extent of its natural powers together with operating grace, in that case the attempt is not in vain; indeed it is necessary, though it does not have the full power to hold fast to its salvation. Luther everywhere abounds in such arguments, which are like feats of legerdemain: they seem awesome when seen from a distance but are sheer nonsense when looked at closely. But I am trying to skip over many things of this sort, lest my book have no end if I should try to respond to all the trivial trash with which he abounds, so much so that he makes us sick to our stomachs. Luther accomplishes nothing by distinguishing the effort and the attempt to observe from observance itself, since each is bound to the other: if you deny one you deny both; if you accept one you accept both. Whoever obeys is not understood to obey like an axe that cuts by the will and action of a workman, but rather he accommodates his action to the action of the divinity. And actually, what the Pelagians gathered from the words of Ecclesiasticus is more probable than what Luther gathers, namely that free will is a name with no reality and that it does nothing either for good or for evil but that God acts in us in an unqualified way and by absolute necessity, whether you consider the general act of the first cause or the force of particular grace. If the weapon supplied by Ecclesiasticus knocked this wicked, foolish, and insane opinion out of Luther's hands, I would have had good reason to cite this passage, and that would be enough for someone engaged in combat; the other objections about it should have been dispatched elsewhere.

---

[142] An ovation was a lesser honour for a Roman general than a triumph. See *Adagia* I vii 55 (CWE 32 100 and n3).

[143] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 674:22–6 / LW 33 122; Judges 7:22

[144] Erasmus' Folly claims that she alone has the power to preserve youth; see *Moriae encomium* ed Clarence H. Miller ASD IV-3 84:247–86:266 / CWE 27 93–4.

[145] Cf *Adagia* I iv 67 and IV iii 89.

[146] Cf Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3.101–23.

[147] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 674:13–22 / LW 33 122

[148] Such sophistical reasoning was studied together with logic in Erasmus' time. On this fallacy see Aristotle *De sophisticis elenchis* 4.4–5.

* * * * *

---

[149] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 674:27–36 / LW 33 122–3

[150] The Greek adverb is transliterated except for the second last letter.

But if the Pelagians distort this passage in Ecclesiasticus in order to exclude grace and attribute everything to free will,[151] it is of no more concern to me than that Luther distorts the passage to eliminate free will completely in those matters which contribute to salvation. Like Augustine, I join grace with free will but in such a way as to ascribe everything to grace if the action turns out well; but if it does not, because free will has not accommodated itself to grace, then the person is justly condemned. For what Ecclesiasticus is concerned about here is to prevent the wicked murmuring of mankind, which blames its evil deeds on God, as if he had made man such that he cannot not sin. But if free will is completely eliminated by this passage, Ecclesiasticus is simply beating the air and is guilty of foolishness – a very shameful fault according to the rhetoricians – because he is saying something which not only does not support his case but also works against him. 'It makes no difference,' Luther says, 'whether you completely eliminate free will or attribute to it a little power which is ineffective; for the one who is commanding, threatening, and promising is still mocking his listener.'[152] Not so; it makes a great difference. If someone does not make himself available to grace through free will to the full extent of his natural powers or if he neglects the grace he has received, he should attribute his destruction to himself, not to God. Therefore, from that power of choice, however weak, it is clear that God's judgment is just, as Augustine writes in his letter to Valentinus: 'If God's grace does not exist,' he says, 'how does he save the world? And if free will does not exist, how does God judge the world?'[153] Certainly this is the point Ecclesiasticus is making, to show mankind that there is no reason to blame its evil deeds on God. But just as I think there is no reason to deny that God sometimes gives commandments without offering grace, or even takes it away so as to show mankind that it can do nothing without the aid of grace, so too according to the opinion of Ambrose he generally does not deny grace to anyone who does the best he can and does not take it away from anyone unless that person fails to live up to the grace he has.[154] But to give commandments to wicked men without adding grace is to harden them. And he hardens no one unless

* * * * *

[151] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 674:37–675:13 / LW 33 123

[152] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 674:29–36 / LW 33 122–3

[153] *Ad Valentinum ... epistolae duae* 1.2 PL 44 875–6

[154] *De vocatione omnium gentium* 2.25 PL 51:710–11; this work is of uncertain authorship and has been attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine as well as to St Ambrose; see 339 and n11 above. On this opinion, see 341 and n24 above.

they deserved it ahead of time, so that the sin which is increased by their disobedience is the kind of sin that is also the punishment due to earlier sins.

By the same token, it is probable that God's grace is mostly provided to those who lead good lives as best they can according to the law of nature. Although there is nothing God cannot do, still we have not yet read about the conversion of anyone who sinned with deliberate malice. For Paul's judgment was in error, not his feelings, and for that reason he says: 'I acted in ignorance and therefore I received mercy.'[155] But we do not read that Alexander, Hermogenes, and Phygellus[156] came to their senses. And Matthew 10[:11] commands the apostles, when they have entered a city in order to preach the gospel, to inquire who in the city is worthy of it. I am not unaware that Augustine makes this refer to the election of God,[157] but how will the apostles learn from the other citizens who belongs to the elect and who does not? Certainly I think this should be referred to a life lived without malice, even if not without sin. Moreover, it is credible that the man among the Corinthians who married his father's wife either sinned out of error because he thought it was licit to do so or else was overcome by the weakness of the flesh; for I think that woman was his stepmother whom he married after his father's death.[158] And Augustine shows us a rule whereby whenever we read 'I will harden his heart' or 'I have seduced that prophet' or 'God delivered them up to a reprobate mind,' we should understand that they deserved this because of earlier evil deeds.[159] Now even if we reject the opinion of the moderns, still, the first departure from the innocence bestowed by baptism derives from free will, which enables man to turn away from grace. 'No,' Luther will say, 'that departure springs from the withdrawal of grace.' True, but the reason for the withdrawal of grace is that free will turned elsewhere. For Adam, I think, did not fall simply because grace was withdrawn but because by means of free will he turned to something other than he should have. As for whether Adam could have avoided evil without new grace, whether he could have made progress, whether he could have attained to eternal life, this is no place to examine the opinions

* * * * *

[155] 1 Tim 1:13

[156] Unorthodox teachers rejected by Paul; see 1 Tim 1:20 and 2 Tim 1:15.

[157] *De correptione et gratia* 15.46 PL 44 944–5. Actually Augustine is here making the point not about Matt 10:11 but about the parallel text in Luke 10:5–6.

[158] 1 Cor 5:1–5

[159] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 23.45 PL 44 910–11

of the scholastics on such matters, especially since they are not confirmed by clear scriptural evidence.[160]

Now when Paul wrote that 'through the Law comes knowledge of sin,'[161] there is no doubt that this applies to the Law commanding someone who is without grace. For in that passage he is opposing the wicked Jews, who scorned grace and trusted in the works of the Law, though they did not obey it. But the most probable opinion never separates a commandment from grace, but it joins them in such a way that free will nevertheless does its part. For those who are good the Law throws light ahead, guiding them on their path; those who have simply gone astray, the Law, acting together with grace, calls back to the path; the malicious and stubborn it hardens even further so that they may understand that they perish by their own fault through the just judgment of God – or if in their blindness they do not wish to understand it, at least others will. This is a far cry from the opinion of Luther, who would say that neither John the Baptist nor even the most holy Virgin Mother of Jesus, however abundantly showered with grace, could keep any commandment of God.

If Pelagius bases his error on this passage, that is nothing new; even more pestilential heretics do the same thing, nor does that fact undermine the opinion of the orthodox. Also, although many interpreters holding diverse opinions vie with each other to seize this text for themselves, still they all agree in positing that the will is in some sense free, and thus, in undermining the opinion of Luther, who nowhere accepts the freedom of the will – except that now he has fabricated something about mankind's rule over creatures beneath it (although he eliminates this in turn when he says that here too everything happens as God wills). Moreover, if the varying judgments of the interpreters give heretics the opportunity to move in and take over a passage as if they were filling a vacuum, yet in most passages the disagreement is only partial. But if any variation of interpretation whatever were to abrogate the authority of a scriptural text, heretics could always introduce variation by proposing an interpretation different from anyone else's, as Luther does here. And it is even more unjust for someone to reject the evidence of Scripture because interpretations vary while at the same time claiming scriptural authority for his side, even though he himself also

* * * * *

[160] For such questions see Peter Lombard *Sententiae in quatuor libris distinctae* II dist 19–20 and dist 29.1 PL 192 689–94, 719. Lombard's *Sententiae* became the basis for many scholastic commentaries; see *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 264 n903.

[161] Rom 3:20

disagrees with the others, unless he provides certain, clear, and invincible arguments. Finally, those who differ do so only partly, but Luther disagrees totally. On this side many of the orthodox agree; on his side there are none but a few who have been rejected by the church and by common sense.

And to make himself seem more clever, he notes that it also follows from these words of Ecclesiasticus that faith is within the power of mankind, though it is a singular and rare gift of God.[162] If by 'singular' he means 'remarkable,' I agree with him. But when Paul writes that 'not everyone has the faith,' he is blaming the wickedness of persons who turn away from the gospel as if from a light that is freely offered to all. And so, just as God in his kindness does not deny this gift to anyone who does not reject it, so too he does not withdraw it unless he is offended by the guilt of the person who has it or because of some special reason at a particular time, so that a person's fall should result, not in his destruction, but rather in an increase in his virtue. But what good does all this do Luther? For Sirach is not talking there about the gift of justifying faith but about obedience, either that which the creature owes the creator by nature or that which a redeemed person owes his redeemer by covenant. For there is good faith on both sides, from the one who professes and the one who promises. For this is how God speaks: 'If you keep faith by observing my commandments, I will keep faith by fulfilling my promises; to keep it, however, depends partly on your free will.'[163] And this is the sort of trifling indulged in by my opponent, who alone can cite Holy Scripture opportunely, fittingly, and aptly and who hoists *A Discussion* on her own petard![164]

Then, too, as for what he adds about Satan reigning in mankind with full power,[165] if he is talking about the wicked and if we do not accept the opinion of the scholastics, no one says that such a person can be converted without the assistance of grace. If he is talking about those justified by faith, either Luther is lying or Paul does so in Romans 5[:20–1]: 'But where transgression abounded, there grace also abounded, so that, as the reign of sin led to death, so too grace might reign through justice and lead to eternal life.' I assume he does not have the gall to say that Satan and the Spirit of Christ reign in the same person, and in fact that 'full power' is a Lutheran

* * * * *

[162] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 675:11–13 / LW 33 123; Luther means that Erasmus' interpretation of the passage necessitates such a conclusion.
[163] Erasmus' interpretation of Ecclus 15:16
[164] *Adagia* I i 51
[165] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 675:36–7 / LW 33 124

hyperbole. For it is one thing for sin to be in the saints; another, for it to reign over them. For to those justified by the death of Christ Paul writes: 'Therefore let not sin reign in your mortal body so as to make you obey its lusts.'[166] By such obedience the reign of sin is introduced, and when sin has been accepted grace ceases to reign. So far is it from the truth that Satan reigns in the justified that even in the wicked God in his goodness tempers his tyranny.[167]

Furthermore, it is outrageous for Luther to infer here that this passage in Ecclesiasticus offers not the least bit of proof for free will but that it indeed eliminates free will more than any other passage.[168] You recognize the man's hyperbole, which I am surprised did not go even further. And whatever insults he here heaped upon reason and human wisdom, upon my wretched and ridiculous *Discussion*, by the same token he heaped upon the Doctors of the church, Ambrose, Bernard, and especially Augustine, who uses such passages to assert the existence of free will in chapter 2 and elsewhere later in the book he addressed to Valentine on grace and free will, as he frequently did in other books as well. For this is what Augustine says about commandments: 'How does he command if there is no free will?' From a psalm he cites 'His will is in the law of the Lord,' inferring that a person stands firm in the Law by means of his will. He cites from Paul: 'Do not be conquered by evil.' Again, from a psalm: 'Do not be like a horse and a mule.' From Proverbs: 'Do not reject the counsels of your mother' and 'Do not be wise in your own eyes' and 'Do not fail the instruction of the Lord' and 'Do not refrain from doing good to the poor' and 'Do not devise evil deeds against your friend.' Again from the Psalms: 'He did not wish to understand so as to do good.' Having mentioned these, he makes the following inference: 'What do such innumerable texts in the divine speech of the Old Testament show except the free choice of the human will?' Having cited many similar passages from the New Testament, he concludes: 'Namely, when he says "Don't do this" and "Don't do that" and when the work of the will is required to do or not do something commanded by God, it becomes sufficiently clear that free will exists.' Then he gathers what Ecclesiasticus had proposed: 'Therefore no one should blame God in his heart, but rather when anyone sins let him attribute it to himself, and when he does something in accordance

* * * * *

[166] Rom 6:12

[167] Erasmus and Luther differed sharply about the closeness of Satan to the actual lives of all men, both the faithful and the wicked. See Oberman *Luther* 104–5.

[168] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 675:37–9 / LW 33 124

with God let him not set it apart from his own will.'[169] The man who wrote this does not exclude grace from good will, though at the same time he asserts free will. It is true that the proof-texts he adduces up to this point to show that the will is specifically addressed by God's commandments do not always contain the phrase 'do not,' which the translator added on his own.[170] But Augustine cites very many other texts from the Sacred Volumes, arguing from them in the same way as the drunken *Discussion* does. But if Luther refuses to accept the authority of Augustine here, then he should renounce the assistance of that authority when it helps to make his case. For he boasts that the opinion of Augustine is his own opinion. But he brazenly seizes half of Augustine's opinion for himself, rejecting the other half, although it is utterly false that Augustine asserts what Luther does, as I have made clear in the first book. Nevertheless, I am not saying these things in order to overwhelm Luther with the authority of the Doctors of the church – even if I could rightly do so, with him the attempt would be in vain – but rather to show that the impudence of the language he indulges in against *A Discussion* tends to heap no more scorn on me than it does on all the others, especially Augustine (the only one to whose authority he usually yields) and that such arguments as mine are not[171] so absurd as to have no value in a debate, like those which the scholastics call the 'preliminary opposition.'[172] I am not at all moved when Luther chants his dogmas to us over and over in his triumphs. For I do not care what he asserts, but what he proves. How often he sneeringly reiterates 'our Discussion.' Would I not be within my rights if I called him 'our buffoon' or 'our braggart'? But far be it from me to imitate what I condemn! Our lawgiver[173] concludes this section as follows: 'And this passage and others like it – "if you wish," "if you listen," "if you do" – do not show anything except what people ought to

* * * * *

[169] In *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 2.4 PL 44 883–4 Augustine cites the passages quoted here by Erasmus (Ps 1:2; Rom 12:21; Ps 31.9; Prov 1:8, 3:7, 11, 27, 29; Ps 35:4) and draws the conclusions quoted by Erasmus.

[170] Erasmus seems to mean that the Hebrew uses a future tense with an imperative meaning.

[171] In LB and Basel 1527 the Latin here has two negatives, though the sense seems to require only one.

[172] Erasmus seems to refer here to the form of questions in a scholastic summa: arguments against the accepted position, an argument for it, an explanation of the accepted position, and refutations of the opposing arguments. 'Preliminary opposition' (*ante oppositum*) seems to be the first or the first two elements.

[173] In the Latin the Greek word νομοθέτης is transliterated into the Latin alphabet.

do.'[174] Was anyone ever said to be obliged to do something he cannot do, unless it is his own fault that he cannot? – though even the fallen are not deprived of a return to life. Can a sinner, then, come to his senses? Why should he not, with the assistance of grace, together with the best that he can do?[175]

[*Other Old Testament passages held to support free will*]
He examines the passage I brought up from Genesis 4[:7]: 'If you do good, will you not receive? If, however, you do evil, will not sin immediately be at the door? etc.'[176] Was it not appropriate to propose this clear passage as an argument, especially since Chrysostom, Jerome, and other writers infer from it the freedom of the human will?[177] But it is pointless for Luther to shout once more that here everything is attributed to free will, nothing left for the Spirit or grace. Cain had begun to relinquish the grace he had, and hence God prods his mind by warning him; this is the grace which Augustine calls 'operating.'[178] If Cain had not spurned it, more abundant grace would not have been lacking to enable him to resist the urges of his mind. That he had begun to relinquish it was undoubtedly the action of his free will, but if he had adapted it to the grace offered to him, he would not have gone as far as fratricide. But how could he have spurned the grace offered to him except by free will? In this book Luther shamelessly croaks again and again that I attribute to free will without grace the power to will good works effectively and to perform them, whereas again and again I hammer the point home that in good deeds I do not separate grace from free will. Then too, whenever I use the phrase 'free will,' he interprets 'free' in an unqualified sense, even though I more than once make it clear what I mean, as I do a little further on: 'If the human will is in no sense free to do good, or even, as some assert, not free to do either good or evil, what is the meaning of the words "if you are willing" and "if you are not willing"'?[179] If mankind has no free will to do either good or evil, as Luther teaches, what is the point of that fearful exaggeration about Adam once

* * * * *

[174] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 676:1–3 / LW 33 124–5

[175] See n24 above.

[176] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 675:4–5 / LW 33 125; *A Discussion* CWE 76 33. In *A Discussion* Erasmus quotes the entire text; here, only the first part. Luther quotes only the second part of the text.

[177] Chrysostom *In librum Geneseos homiliae* 20.1 PG 53 166; Jerome *Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos* on Gen 4:7 CCSL 72 7

[178] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 30 n109.

[179] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 34–5.

grace was taken away and he was left to his free will?[180] Can anyone be left to something that does not exist? Why was it necessary to spew out so many words here as he solemnly teaches us that in the expression 'Your desire will be subject to you and you will rule over it'[181] the future tense is used as an imperative, lest we should think it was a promise and not a command and lest God should seem to be a liar because what he predicted did not happen? Did anyone ever doubt it? But at the same time he seems to have forgotten that earlier he denied that ordinary language is used in Scripture and called us back to the proper terms of dialectic.[182] And he has such a high opinion of this banal comment that he takes the translator to task for not translating the future tense into the imperative mood,[183] as if we did not come upon this form of speech everywhere in Holy Scripture: 'You shall not kill,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall love your neighbour,' etc.[184] Such a strict doctor! He is always mouthing at us his dogma that from imperative words we cannot infer the ability to will or not will. But we refuse to accept his dogmas, and we demand arguments, not assertions. It is for kings to lay down laws, not debaters. What good does it do to present him with evidence from Scripture or the leading men of the church? He firmly rejects them. If you brought up ten thousand proof-texts from Scripture, he has an axe to cut all knots:[185] 'These show what a person ought to do, not what he can do.'[186]

[*The parting of the ways*]

With similar artillery he attacks the third passage: 'I have placed before your face the way of life and that of death; choose what is good, etc.'[187] If we concede to Luther that all the commandments of the Old and New Testaments, all the exhortations, all the threats, all the promises added to the commandments do nothing more than to make people recognize that they can do nothing either for good or for evil, then he has (as I said) the means to discard all such evidence. But this point, which he takes as obvious, is controverted; indeed it is rejected and summarily dismissed by everyone,

* * * * *

[180] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 675:26–38 / LW 33 124
[181] Gen 4:7
[182] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 672:30–7 / LW 33 119–20
[183] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 676:18–27 / LW 33 125–6
[184] Exod 20:13–17
[185] *Adagia* I i 6
[186] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 676:1–3 / LW 33 124–5
[187] Deut 30:15, 19; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 676:28–9 / LW 33 126. Erasmus quotes the entire passage (Deut 30:15–19) in *A Discussion*; see CWE 76 34.

especially if we should grant him that whenever I attribute anything to free will, we should allow grace to be excluded.[188] What can you do with such a debater? Every time he does this – and he is always doing it – take it as a sign, dear reader, of the extraordinary shamelessness he displays in overlooking my principal point in the debate, that the action of grace is combined with the action of free will. He admits that a person stands at a crossroads, but he denies that any path lies open to him, either to the right or the left; if someone tells him that he can walk down whichever path he prefers,[189] that person does nothing more than make him understand that no path lies open to him, neither for good, unless the help of the Spirit is present, nor for evil, unless God allows it.[190] As for the first alternative, doesn't Luther inadvertently agree with me? I say we can walk down the path on the right with the help of grace; Luther confesses the same thing in different language, saying 'if the Spirit is present.' As for the second alternative, although I do not deny it can happen that God would not permit someone or other to walk down the left path for reasons unknown to us, nevertheless, as a general rule, people fall into sin by their own will. And yet Luther calls the path towards the good impossible, though he confesses it lies open by the access of grace. Then, too, he unfairly examines the individual passages with respect to one opinion only, even though these passages have been brought into the debate so as to be accommodated to the other opinions that have not been rejected and so as to be applied in some fashion to any of them; they would at least cause us to dismiss out of hand that utterly absurd dogma of Luther, that the human will has not the least bit of power for good or for evil. Quite the contrary, those who favour the opinion of the scholastics would respond that it is within a person's power to choose whichever path he wishes. Is grace, therefore, completely excluded? Not at all, but rather God's grace never is nor was nor will be lacking to those who do the best they can.[191]

He never stops singing the same old tune like a cuckoo bird: 'The words of the Law do not show what the will can do but rather they bring some light to the blindness of mankind.' Does someone who knows the Law immediately recognize his sin? Many have accused the Law of being unjust

* * * * *

---

[188] That is, if Luther's accusation that Erasmus dissociates grace from free will were accepted, it would render Luther's argument about the meaning of scriptural commands even less acceptable

[189] That is, God in Deut 30:15–19

[190] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 677:1–7 / LW 33 126

[191] See n24 above.

and unworthy of God. There has been no lack of those who say that Moses deceived the dull-witted crowd with sham and trickery, as Minos deceived the Cretans. Is someone who knows his sin immediately enlightened? Such knowledge throws some into despair; some it makes brutally cruel. Therefore either the knowledge of sin does not spring from the Law or it is useless without the presence of grace. If grace is not present, what good is the knowledge? But let us grant that a person is more curable when he recognizes his sin. Can sin not be known unless so many commandments make a person understand that there is none which he can obey? If Luther says the person can do so with the help of grace, he agrees with me. But in that case, where is his paradox that even a person enlightened by faith and charity cannot do any good deed? Is it an evil deed to observe the Law? Is someone who observes it doing nothing? For that is what Karlstadt teaches.[192] And what about that idea much bruited about among them that a person does nothing in either good or bad works but rather God does all things in us? But Luther should not have drifted away from this target. And so I think it is sufficiently clear from what I said above how shamelessly Luther twists those few words[193] which he endlessly dins in our ears, 'Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin,' in order to defend his case.[194] The precepts of the Law are not the only means to that end, and for a person to know his sin there are other ways than impossible commandments. How did Paul know his sin? He was warned that he had gone astray. A person can know his sin more readily if the Law prescribes what is fair, reasonable, and possible. A person will more readily believe he is not a sinner if all God's commandments are impossible. On that plan a person will more readily think the worse of God and the better of himself. And yet Luther has such confidence in this most trifling of trifles that he keeps threatening us that he will sing us the same old tune no matter what evidence we present from Scripture. But as often as he does so he will hear in turn: 'shameless distorter of Scripture.'

[*Imperative and indicative moods*]
Once more he brings up that superb teaching about the difference between commandments and promises, and from the grammarians he seeks out the difference between the imperative and indicative moods: words of command do not show that a person can do something, but an indicative

* * * * *

[192] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 6 n4, 33; *Hyperaspistes 1* 278–9.
[193] Literally, 'three words' (*Adagia* I v 36)
[194] Rom 3:20. See *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 677:7–16 / LW 33 127.

statement does so.[195] Since this is quite well known to schoolchildren, he is surprised that we theologians talk such nonsense in our second childhood.[196] Whom is he insulting here? Me? I never taught such a thing. But what theologian is so out of his mind that he does not know what this person teaches so superciliously, namely that the imperative mood commands and does not make pronouncements? 'You claim,' he says, 'that something is observed, done, chosen, and fulfilled – and that by our own power – as soon as you hear the voice of someone commanding "Do," "Observe," "Choose."'[197] Can anyone believe this person is sober? Who ever said that what is commanded is immediately accomplished? But if he hadn't spoken in this way, his language would have lacked Lutherly hyperbole. Ordinary, uneducated people know that a person who wants something does not immediately have what he wants and that a condition expresses something undetermined. And yet if someone said to a miser, 'If you had taken care of your wife as well as you have taken care of your money, you would have a faithful wife,' or 'Would that you had taken as good care of your wife as you did of your money,' an uneducated layperson would say 'I will sue for defamation of character.' The defendant will cry out that subjunctive or optative expressions do not state facts, but the judge will fine him out of common sense. But what do the boys on the streetcorner[198] know: 'Words in the imperative mood prescribe what should be done, not what the person addressed can do.' But those same boys also know that whoever commands what cannot be done is either stupid or ridiculous or tyrannical. Let Luther learn this by experience if he does not believe me. Let him go into a classroom and command one elementary student to recite Homer's *Iliad* from memory, command another to translate Terence into Hebrew, another to fly up to the roof, and similar feats one after the other. What would they say? What except 'This man is either mad or drunk or he is mocking us.' 'Schoolboys know the difference between the imperative and indicative moods.' But who ever taught them this conclusion from it that Luther so mightily ridicules in the theologians? To be sure, nature and common sense, from which Luther diverges so amazingly as he snatches in all directions to find support for his too, too beloved dogma. And even so, if someone spoke that way to the boys, he would be acting less ridicu-

* * * * *

[195] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 677:17–27 / LW 33 127

[196] *Adagia* I v 36

[197] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 677:27–36 / LW 33 127–8

[198] The Latin *in triviis* can also refer to the trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric), which was the first part of a university education.

lously than Luther, who applies his principle to all of God's commandments. For he commands the boys to do something that could be done over a period of time. God, if we believe Luther, issues commands that cannot be obeyed, no matter how much effort is expended or time spent, not even if the Spirit works in us – laws such as no tyrant we have ever read about ever issued, laws that are not worthy of the name. And an opinion so absurd and contradictory to common sense as this one, which Luther makes the standard of interpretation for Scripture, he proves by a few words plucked out of Paul, 'Through the Law comes knowledge of sin,'[199] as if a law that commands what can be done would not show the wicked their sins, so that evil men might refrain from wrongdoing out of fear of punishment (so as to be less guilty or at least less harmful or, if they don't refrain, so as to have no excuse), and as if it would not also show sin to good men so that they may avoid it and seek out what is honourable.

Now that he has found a ready and easy way to invalidate any evidence from Scripture, he uses the same axe to cut down the passage quoted by *Discussion* from Deuteronomy 30:[200] 'Words in the imperative mood and the texts cited prove something different from what he proposes.' I proposed that free will could do nothing without grace, and these texts show that it can do all things, and itself being alone (to talk in a Lutherly way).[201] We have to put up with such babble throughout the whole dispute. Hence I want you to remember once and for all, dear reader, that my *Discussion* sets out various opinions which are not rejected by the church. And in the course of the debate I have not merely one in mind, and my aim is not to support the opinion which I declare at the end to be the one I favour most but to knock Luther's weapon out of his hands by means of scriptural passages that attribute something to free will, whether more according to some or less according to others – for even the orthodox have various opinions in the matter. Regardless of how each of them lays hold of Scripture, I am certainly accomplishing what I wished, namely to make it clear that Luther is wrong when he asserts that Holy Scripture teaches nothing except that

* * * * *

---

[199] Rom 3:20

[200] The Basel 1527 edition has the error *tertio et trigesimo* (33), as do LB and *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 678:1. But *De libero arbitrio* Walter 33:6 (*A Discussion* CWE 76 34) has the correct '30.'

[201] A summary of *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 678:21–8 / LW 33 129. Erasmus mocks Luther's awkward absolute *se solo*, where *ex se* or *per se* would have been better Latin.

there is no free will.[202] Now, since he twists his scriptural passages most outrageously, if I in turn had twisted mine to win the victory, simply as a debating point, to show that some places in Scripture seem to contradict one another but can be reconciled by comparing one with another, why would it have been absurd for me to do so, especially since that is what *A Discussion* professed to do and actually did? Is Luther so ignorant of the arena of disputation that he does not know the difference between refuting and propounding, between argumentation and pronouncing judgment? St Thomas very often reasons in this way: 'In John 6 the Lord says, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood"; therefore this sacrament is necessary for salvation.'[203] From a scriptural quotation he draws a false conclusion, sometimes even a blasphemous one, and we recognize that it is legitimate to do so in the arena of debate. Luther endlessly reproaches me for my inferences – or rather not even my inferences but rather, once he has distorted them, his own. But if, in the heat of the debate, I had used absurd allegations and done so to knock the weapon out of the hands of my adversary and thus defeat him, I would have been doing nothing that is not customary among theologians. As it is, nowhere in what I say do I draw the conclusion he so often and so scurrilously pounces upon, that free will can do all things without grace and itself being alone.[204] Where did Luther learn such dialectic as this: 'He can; therefore he can do all things by himself' and 'He cannot do it without assistance; therefore he cannot do anything at all by himself'? If someone says that the emperor can capture a city, is he affirming that he can do it without the help of soldiers? 'But in the course of the argument,' he says, 'you did not mention grace.'[205] I did not know that I was dealing with a person so forgetful that I needed to repeat the very same thing for every verse. For I also mention grace frequently. Nor did that have anything to do with the argument. For in that place[206] I cite only passages which, however they are taken, destroy Luther's position, namely that all the commandments of God are impossible. If such evidence seems to show that free will can do all things by itself – though I did not say that

* * * * *

[202] The aim Erasmus expresses here explains why his judgments about free will vary considerably.

[203] *Summa theologiae* III q 73 a 3. The argument from John 6 is the first of three objections to the true position; later in the article Thomas refutes all three objections as false. See n172 above.

[204] Cf n201 above.

[205] Cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 678:21–32 / LW 33 129.

[206] Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 33–6.

anywhere – it is all the more stupid of Luther to take it so, since he claims it is impossible to show from Scripture that there even is such a thing as free will.

And so, although this insult is partly unjustified, partly false, nevertheless he keeps croaking it at us as if it were a notorious sophism, jumping for joy, mocking me, frisking about, all but triumphing. And all the while, this one and only sharp-sighted debater does not see that he is making a fool of himself in the eyes of men of good judgment as he goes on mocking *A Discussion*. In these two sections, which are not very long, how many tasteless witticisms he utters; he calls her his *Discussion*; he rouses *Discussion* from her somnolence; he finds *Discussion* deficient in memory; he concludes that she either doesn't understand anything or that she doesn't care about her cause; he accuses her of a most shameful offence in an advocate, namely, stupidity, because she brings up points that undermine the case she is making; he ridicules *Discussion* for flattering herself so very blithely; she always argues against her own position; she is ridiculous in everything she says or does. But one of his very best sayings is this one: 'Lady *Discussion*,' he says, 'you make wrong inferences and do not prove your conclusion, but you imagine something follows or is proved because you are blind and somnolent.'[207] And yet Augustine uses similar inferences time and time again to assert free will. O companions of Luther, where are you? Why do you not applaud your glorious leader? Why do you not cry out 'Bravo! very fine! elegant! witty! top-notch!' Nomentanus and Balatro in Horace are better buffoons.[208] What could be sillier than such jokes? What more insane than such insults? With such gems as these he made sport of the king of England,[209] and there was no lack of those who applauded him – so true is it that birds of a feather flock together.[210] What does my *Discussion* infer, you idle babbler?[211] No more than that free will is established by Scripture. 'Therefore,' he says, 'free will without grace can do everything.'[212] That is your conclusion, not *Discussion*'s. For I promised that I would bring up scriptural texts, some of which seem to eliminate free will completely,

* * * * *

[207] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 678:1–32 / LW 33 128–9. The quotation is *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 678:13–15 / LW 33 128.

[208] *Satires* 2.8.25–33, 61–74, 83

[209] In 1522 Luther scurrilously attacked Henry VIII in *Contra Henricum regem Angliae* (WA 10/2 180–222).

[210] Literally, 'lips find lettuce to match them' (*Adagia* I x 71)

[211] In the text σπερμολόγος 'idle babbler,' literally 'seed-picker,' is transliterated into the Latin alphabet.

[212] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 678:25 / LW 33 129

LB X 1365A

some to establish it.[213] After they were cited, what was there left to do? Obviously, to explain those texts that seem to eliminate it completely and then to temper the interpretation of those that establish it so as to ascribe the sum and substance to grace, but to do so in such a way that the human will also plays its part. Didn't *Discussion* perform what she promised? But she did so in the proper place. Therefore *Discussion* did not forget herself, but you did so outrageously by demanding in one place what she promised to do somewhere else. Indeed, one can detect in this debater a special peculiarity: in the individual parts of the argument, he fights as if the victory were located there; in each part he makes preliminary statements, delivers a peroration, and triumphs. And yet he is not so annoying because of his stupid insults as because of his endless repetitions. Therefore, if I were to answer this point every time he brings it up, this volume would become huge; hence I want the reader to understand that whenever I say Luther is cockadoodledooing, I am deliberately passing over such nonsense as this.

[*The position of man in the presence of grace*]

In the next section, he repeats the same lie, that my *Discussion* everywhere imagines that mankind can either do what is commanded or at least understands that it cannot. *Discussion* holds that according to the opinion of some a person by his natural powers can make such progress that God will not deny him grace. She holds that according to the opinion of others free will can and does do all things with the help of grace. What does Luther hold? That the whole of mankind is bound, miserable, captive, sick, dead. Not satisfied with that, he makes all persons so blind that they think they are free and sound. Since no one lacks the law of nature, which tells mankind that many things should be sought or avoided, how can it be that all mankind, even before grace, was such as Luther imagines? What law instructed the philosophers so that they handed down many splendid principles about the habit[214] of virtue and the duties which flow from it? But with Luther hyperbole always follows hyperbole, just as one handhold leads to another.[215] 'Such a person needed the Law to command so many impossible things.' For what purpose? 'A weighty and serious one: so that he will know his

* * * * *

[213] In *De libero arbitrio* Erasmus cited some scriptural texts supporting free will (*A Discussion* CWE 76 21–45); he also discussed scriptural texts which seem to deny free will (*A Discussion* 46–74), including some cited by Luther in *Assertio* article 36 (*A Discussion* 59–65).

[214] On the Aristotelian meaning of 'habit' see *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 287 n1045; see n1606 below.

[215] Cf *Adagia* I iv 4.

sin and beg for a physician.' I have already shown that this could be done more advantageously if the Law had commanded what is possible. 'But a person knows his misery better,' he says, 'if he sees that the Law cannot be observed.'[216] But the Pharisees believed they observed the Law. Therefore the Law does not always bring forth knowledge of sin, or if it does, what it brings forth is useless. But let us grant that it does. How does the Law teach that a person can by no means observe what is commanded? And then how will a person be persuaded he ought to observe what is not within his power? Or how will he be persuaded that God is as merciful as Luther here makes him out to be, if he imposes such harsh laws on persons who do not deserve them except in so far as they are descended from Adam?

But let us grant this also, that a person recognizes that his life is a complete disaster. What then? He will beg for God's mercy; God will immediately hear the voice of the person who begs. For at this point, although Luther elsewhere makes God more cruel than any tyrant, since by a sheer whim of his will he commits to eternal fire someone who doesn't deserve it, now he suddenly makes God so merciful that at the first cry he immediately changes flesh to spirit, that is, he turns an instrument of Satan into a temple of God. Why didn't he hear the voice of Balaam in Numbers 23[:10] when he said, 'May my soul die the death of the justified'? But where does this begging come from? From grace. What, then, does a person beg for: what he has or what he does not have? If he begs without grace, he sins by doing so, according to Luther; indeed, he does so even in a state of grace. How, then, will he arouse God's mercy by calling upon him? If the person who begs has what he is seeking, how does God immediately hear him, since he already gave it before it was asked for? But if Luther posits some middle ground between someone who already has sanctifying grace and someone who has not yet attained to it but is being prepared for it, what happens to that hyperbole which makes every person sick, captive, untamed, and self-indulgent? He means that this is the case when a person is beyond the pale of grace, I think: if not, the hyperbole is even more outrageous. Therefore a person appeals for mercy by sinning if he is beyond the pale of grace or on some middle ground between flesh and spirit. Why, then, is Luther always crying out against those who think that a person solicits and obtains grace by almsdeeds, fasting, prayer, spiritual reading, and other pursuits which are, as they say, morally good, when he himself says that grace is immediately achieved at the very first cry? Which is easier, to cry out for it or by good deeds to solicit it long and hard?

* * * * *

---

[216] Cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 679:23–37 / LW 33 130–1.

LB X 1366A

Now since Luther so often deals with me as follows: 'Free will can do this or that, therefore it can do this or that by its own powers without the assistance of grace,' if I have the right to deal with him in the same way, I would reason thus: 'The Law brings forth knowledge of sin, knowledge of sin makes us recognize our disastrous condition, recognition brings forth a plea for divine help, the plea brings God's mercy; therefore the Law in and of itself causes a person to recognize sin, and knowledge of sin without grace makes him recognize – that is, confess – his sinfulness, recognition by itself makes him beg for God's mercy, the plea has such force that God cannot deny his mercy to someone who begs for it.' Where in this series does Luther place the beginning of grace? After God has listened to the plea? Then whatever came before was done apart from grace under the plenary power of Satan. And yet what was done in that way has such force that it compels God to impart his grace immediately. And how often does the man who teaches such things in his *Assertion* mock and sneer and even charge with impiety those who think that mankind by their natural powers can progress so far by means of morally good works that God in his goodness will not withhold the help of grace from someone who is doing the best he can.[217] How often he proclaims that they are worse than Pelagius himself! But how much more outrageous is what Luther here attributes to knowledge and pleading. For if someone who is dissatisfied with himself because he recognizes his sinfulness goes on to give alms, fasts, becomes familiar with Holy Scripture, goes to mass, listens to sermons, prays, and for all that remains sinful and desires to sin, still he does more than someone who merely understands that the commandments cannot be kept and begs for mercy so that God will confer eternal life on him. For according to Luther grace does not have enough power to enable a person to observe even the least little commandment. What, then, does it do? It turns what would have been mortal sins into venial sins. And so neither knowledge of sin nor pleading brings a person to the point where he can observe the commandments; they bring him only to the point of recognizing his lamentable plight. Then God, who was so harsh when he gave the commandments, suddenly becomes so kind that he will bestow eternal life on someone who does not keep the commandments or who even perseveres in wrongdoing, as long as he cries out and believes with a Lutheran-style faith.

He cites Isaiah 61[:1]:[218] 'He sent me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal those whose hearts are contrite.' (Where some read 'to the poor,'

* * * * *

[217] Erasmus here makes Luther's argument equivalent to the doctrine of *facere quod in se est* (see n24 above), which Luther vehemently denies.

[218] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 679:30–1 / LW 33 130

Jerome translates and the Hebrew means 'gentle,' 'not at all fierce.')[219] But Luther makes everyone blind and self-satisfied. He will say 'before the Law.' After the Law, then, everyone was dissatisfied with himself? 'No, but the Law cast some down, hardened others.' The Law does not confer grace. How, then, does it soften some people? 'Because it finds material that is softer and more capable of grace.' Some of the gentiles and some of the Jews heard the gospel; some immediately submitted to it; others resisted it with all their might. Where does the difference come from? 'Because some seed fell on good ground, other seed on different soil.'[220] Why is soil different? 'Because of depraved desires and vicious morals.' But where do these corrupting influences come from if not from free will? A simple mind or someone erring out of ignorance is an untilled field, to be sure, but one which is easily capable of growing good seed.

He is also hyperbolical when he says: 'Either God commands the impossible or the Spirit is in vain.'[221] God does not command what is impossible in an unqualified way, nor is the Spirit in vain, without whose help there is no way to arrive at eternal salvation. Now who are the contrite of heart whom Christ heals? Those who recognize their weakness and beg for God's mercy. If they are healed simply by doing this, what does the healer do? If they are not, then either they must be blind or there must be some middle ground between them and the healed – which Luther denies. The Lord says: 'I have not come to call the just but rather the sinful,'[222] meaning by 'just' those who think they are just, and by 'the sinful' those who recognize the wrong they have done. But the Pharisees clung tightly to the Law, and yet the Law did not bring forth recognition of sin in all of them. This, then, as I said, is not the only effect of the Law, nor does it have this effect in everyone, and this ability or inability arises from free will.

[*Does Erasmus attribute good works to free will alone and fail to include grace?*]
In the next section Luther cockadoodledoos, quite appropriately mentioning a solid lump of dough, for all of his language here smacks of the kitchen, where he apparently wrote these things in a drunken stupor. Then, too,

* * * * *

---

[219] *Commentarii in Esaiam* 17.61.1/3.1–10 CCSL 73A 706. Erasmus quotes Luke 4:18, which follows the Septuagint version, *evangelizare pauperibus*; Jerome, following the Hebrew, has *ad annuntiandum mansuetis*. See Erasmus *Annotations on Luke* 4:17 LB VI 247F.

[220] Cf Luke 8:5–8.

[221] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 679:22–3 / LW 33 130

[222] Matt 9:13 (Mark 2:17, Luke 5:32)

what a witty phrase, 'to mix up a solid lump of dough'![223] And yet there are some who think this babbler is amusing! Let others judge what kinds of lumps *Discussion* mixes up; what is clear is that Luther mixes up such drugs as infect the minds of very many simple people. And just as that insipid joke about the lump of dough smacks of the gross spirit by which he is led, so too when he later calls my logical inference a 'Leviathan, that is, an addition'[224] – to make it seem that he knows Hebrew – he smacks of the spirit whose breath leads him to add many hyperboles to Holy Scripture that undermine its wholesome meaning. What does this 'Leviathan' say? 'Therefore free will has full power to do all things; therefore it can do them, itself being alone; therefore it can do it by its own power; therefore it does not need the help of the Spirit.'[225] That Leviathan Luther added these words on his own, whereas my *Discussion* speaks quite differently. He thinks that if he repeats this lie hundreds of times it will seem to be true, but he is quite wrong. Whoever repeats over and over again what is manifestly groundless does not make what he is saying seem less false but makes himself seem more shameless. For what was the point of that sophistical trifle 'If I am willing, you will eat the good things of the earth,'[226] as if anyone could enjoy the goods things of the land against God's will?[227] This is nothing more than a waste of time and paper.

This section confirms Luther's untrustworthiness. Here he repeats what he has said so often elsewhere, that I attribute all power to free will, and yet he himself cites these words of mine: 'What was the point of saying "If you are willing, you will eat the good things of the earth" if there is no freedom of the will?' Does someone who says 'if there is no freedom' attribute all power to the human will? And a bit later: 'What point is there in exhorting people to do something if they are utterly unable to do it?'[228] Is this the language of someone who attributes everything to our will? And yet, after Luther has cited them, he adds: 'What is the point of citing passages which prove nothing, by themselves, and then adding the inference that they attribute everything to free will?'[229] He adds insult to injury.[230] For these passages have so far convinced the church that free will has some

* * * * *

[223] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 679:40–680:1 / LW 33 131 (and n42)
[224] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 681:8–11 / LW 33 133
[225] See n201 above.
[226] Isa 1:19
[227] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 680:5–11 / LW 33 131
[228] *A Discussion* CWE 76 34–5
[229] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 680:13–16 / LW 33 131–2
[230] Literally, 'ties one string to another.' In *Adagia* I viii 59 Erasmus gives various meanings for the saying, one of which is 'join one weak point to another.'

power, and my inference does not attribute all power to it. How often, to be sure, he blurts out that throughout the whole discussion I separate grace from free will. And yet here he reports these words of mine: 'Zechariah demonstrates the exercise of free will more clearly still and indicates the grace in store for whoever exercises it.'[231] Does someone who says grace is in store for a person eliminate it? But to show how extraordinary and glaring the shamelessness of the man is, I will quote some other places from *A Discussion*. Having cited the testimony of Isaiah, I make the following inference: 'If the human will is in no sense free to do good, or even (as some assert) is not free to do either good or evil, what is the meaning of the words, "if you are willing" and "if you are not willing?"' And a bit later: 'Here too I do not see how we can avoid attributing to a sinner a will in some sense free to choose good.' The same point is made by the simile of the person tied up with ropes, who is in no sense free. A little later I make the following inference: 'And where are those who claim that man does nothing, but is only worked upon by operating grace?' And a little later: 'But what can you ascribe to someone who can do nothing, good or bad? To those who have absolutely no control over their will?' And somewhat later: 'All this would have to be meaningless once it is accepted that doing good or evil is a matter of necessity.' And again: 'If everything happens by necessity.' And soon afterwards: 'Are not all of Christ's splendid commandments emptied of meaning if nothing is attributed to human will?' Likewise: 'When good and bad deeds are mentioned so frequently, as is reward, I fail to see how there can be any room for absolute necessity.'[232] I will not go on to cite more instances, lest I overburden the reader. Although the part of *A Discussion* that cites Scripture in favour of free will is full of such inferences, nevertheless Luther has the gall to accuse me of inferring that everything is attributed to the human will, to the exclusion of grace. My inferences propose that grace is in store for anyone who does his best;[233] they exclude the sheer necessity which Luther introduces; they attribute something to free will, but only a little. What room is there, then, for those mindless insults: *Discussion* proposes one thing, proves another; doesn't know what she is talking about; contradicts herself? I do not intend to rebut his insults. It is clear on the face of it[234] what sort of rhetorician Luther is, how consistent he is, never forgetting himself, never changing, always insulting.

* * * * *

[231] *A Discussion* CWE 76 35; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 680:20–1 / LW 33 132

[232] *A Discussion* CWE 76 34–40

[233] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 32 n119.

[234] Cf *Adagia* III iv 49.

LB X 1368B

[*On the distinction between Law and gospel*]
Poor *Discussion* is charged with another crime. 'In the passages she quotes, she does not distinguish between the expressions of the Law and those of the gospel; for she is so blind and ignorant that she does not see what is the Law and what is the gospel.'[235] In fact, there is nothing that Luther is not ashamed to make up. Where do I make the words of the gospel into the words of the Law? Is it because I cite some passages that seem to invite us to grace rather than command what is to be done? Well, so be it. Isn't it true that *Discussion* took it upon herself to show that the invitations, promises, and blandishments of God also prove that the human will is not entirely devoid of action? For example, let us take a text most representative of the gospel: 'Come to me, all who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.'[236] If the human will does nothing, why does he say to it, 'Come'? No one says to someone who is tied up, 'Come to me, I will give you food,' but either takes the food to him on his own initiative or else unties him first. I grant that the works of the Law are not commanded here but rather we are required to listen to the word, and that prepares us for the gift of faith. Then again: 'Repent; the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'[237] Here the kingdom of heaven is promised, but only to those who do penance. If the human will does nothing to promote conversion, why does the gospel exhort it to do so? Penance would have to be given, not commanded. So too in Isaiah 45[:20, 22], 'Gather together and come,' and to the same people he says, 'Turn to me and you will be saved.' What does 'gather together' mean? What does 'turn' mean? Leave your idols, gather together with the Jews into one and the same church, and you will be saved through faith. If someone says, 'Rise up,' he seems to be calling upon the will of someone lying down; if he says, 'Shake off the dust,' that is equivalent to saying 'Abandon your filthy vices'; someone who says, 'Loose your neck from its bonds' is calling for repentance. Then comes a sentence in keeping with the gospel: 'You were sold without payment and you will be bought back without silver.'[238] Again, the command 'If you are seeking, seek' is an expression of reproach to someone not seeking with his whole heart.[239] 'Turn' and 'come' are exhortations to a complete and serious change of living. Most of the promises in the gospel are such that they have a command or a condition attached

* * * * *

[235] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 680:23–5 / LW 33 132
[236] Matt 11:28
[237] Matt 3:2
[238] Isa 52:2–3
[239] Isa 21:12

to them. For example, 'search out,' 'seek,' 'knock' are commands; 'you will find,' 'you will receive,' 'it will be opened to you' are promises.[240] 'Whoever believes and has been baptized will be saved';[241] 'you will be saved' is an evangelical expression, but it includes the condition 'if you believe,' and if that is not fulfilled the promise is empty. And so wouldn't the promises that call upon us to keep the commandments be superfluous, together with the commandments themselves, if the human will does nothing? Where, then, is the confusion between the expressions of the gospel and those of the Law?

But Luther mixes truth with falsehood. If *Discussion* had proposed to speak only of commandments and punishments, then Luther would at any rate have a bone to pick. But since she set out to handle commandments, promises, blandishments, exhortations, adjurations, expostulations, reproaches, threats, fears, rebukes, curses, what was his point in distinguishing the language of the Law from that of the gospel except to display his marvellous knowledge of theology? At this point see once more how true to himself Luther always is. When I cited these words from Isaiah, 'Turn to me and you will be saved,' he says this expression belongs to the gospel.[242] Right afterwards he teaches that Zechariah's words 'Turn to me' contain the whole Law with all its commandments and his other words 'I will turn to you' epitomize the gospel. The same expression in Isaiah belongs to the gospel, but in Zechariah it not only belongs to the Law but embraces the whole Law.[243] I have shown that no passage was taken from Isaiah that did not contain some commandment and that therefore Luther has no grounds whatever to say that they are all words of consolation or promise except for the first passage. I have demonstrated that even if they incontrovertibly did belong to the gospel they still tend to prove free will. I pass over his cockadoodledoo about words of command and his claim that from them I infer that free will does not need grace;[244] he croaks this lie so often that I am sick and tired of refuting it again and again.

He has such a vast fund of verbal abuse that to his previous insults such as 'utter blindness,' 'solid lump,' 'Leviathan,' he here adds 'dozing off,' before he finally touches on the arguments. '"You shall love the Lord your God, etc" is the greatest commandment of all[245] and is cast in the

* * * * *

[240] Matt 7:7, Luke 11:9
[241] Mark 16:16
[242] Isa 45:22; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 680:25–30 / LW 33 132
[243] Zech 1:3; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 680:32–681:11 / LW 33 132–3
[244] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 681:10–11 / LW 33 133
[245] Mark 12:30

imperative mood. But from it we cannot infer that free will has any power, nor can it be inferred from any other commandments.'[246] What if I deny Luther's assumption? He will cite the scholastic doctors at me.[247] It is shameless of him to cite the scholastics at me, since he does not accept the authority of any doctor, whether scholastic or not. As it is, since he admits that the Scotists and the theologians of the *via moderna* have a different opinion from his, why does he attribute more authority to one group than to another? If he has the right to use whatever supports his cause, I have the right to embrace whatever supports mine.[248] At this juncture how does Luther prove his assertion? Does it follow from the fact that few do love God with their whole heart that therefore they cannot do it? But let us grant that mankind cannot perform what the words of the commandment say; then what sort of inference is it to say that since they cannot keep this commandment they cannot keep any at all? Many people who do not love God perfectly or their neighbour as they ought do abstain from murder. And this commandment, 'you shall love,' has a special character: for what is commanded not only always increases here but also is perfected in the pious after this life. What, then, is the meaning of those hyperboles 'with your whole heart, with your whole mind, with all your might'? That God should be loved beyond all things so that neither wife nor children nor death nor life should be put before him. Moreover, the perfection of charity is said to be complete not because it cannot receive any additions but because it has reached a certain level of its own in accordance with our weakness. And if someone does not keep a commandment fully, he is not immediately said to break it, especially in those qualities that increase gradually, among which faith and the love of God are to be numbered. God puts up with the weak until they improve, and he helps them while they improve. This is the rationale by which God requires perfect charity, and we can do what he requires with the help of his grace if we do our best.[249] Here too, then, free will plays its part, as the commandment requires. Nor does it follow from the fact that no observance of the

* * * * *

[246] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 681:12–29 / LW 33 133–4

[247] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 681:29–34 / LW 33 134

[248] Luther claimed that among the scholastic theologians only the Scotists and the *recentiores* (those of the *via moderna*) believed that a person could love God with his whole heart (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 681:29–31 / LW 33 134). Erasmus claims the right to cite the Scotists and the theologians of the *via moderna* to support his case, just as Luther cited the other scholastics on his behalf.

[249] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 32 n119.

Law is pleasing to God apart from faith and charity that therefore someone who keeps the commandment violates it if his faith and charity are imperfect.

Luther goes on frisking about, imagining that he has been extraordinarily successful. He mocks sleepy-eyed *Discussion* when she infers an endeavour of the human will from Zechariah's words 'Turn to me' – just as someone with a lantern might cry out to someone wandering in the dark, 'Turn your eyes in this direction.' I am reluctant to waste my time and that of the reader with such trifles. Still it is worthwhile to show what a grave and serious leader the world has to bring the gospel back to it. 'And according to this new grammar,' he says, '"to turn" means the same as "to endeavour," as if the meaning of "turn to me" were "endeavour to turn" and "I will turn to you" meant "I will endeavour to turn to you," so that he sometimes attributes endeavour even to God whose endeavours perhaps will make grace available[250] to someone who endeavours. For if "turn" means "endeavour" in one place, why not in all?'[251] Where is that new evangelical claque to applaud such wit? Here we have the blasphemous and trashy buffoonery of a man who boasts he has an evangelical spirit. Such insults land not on *Discussion* but on Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, Chrysostom, and other Doctors of the church. Who said that 'turn' means the same thing as 'endeavour'? These are the words of *Discussion*: 'Zechariah indicates both the endeavour of free will and the grace in store for the one who endeavours,'[252] meaning that both can be inferred from his words. If someone says to a boy, 'You will turn out to be a learned man,' what is he pointing out? Isn't it that the boy should study hard? Therefore 'to turn out to be' means 'to study.' If someone says to his steward, 'Fix it so that I can live more comfortably in the country,' doesn't he mean that he wants him to build something? Therefore 'to live comfortably' means 'to build.' For this is the way Luther reasons. If someone says to a person who is facing away, 'Turn this way,' he indicates something which is in the power of that person to do. But thus far Luther has merely indulged in tomfoolery; now he spews out his blasphemies: '"I will turn to you" means "I will endeavour to turn, etc."' But how does he prove this scurrilous bit of sophistry? 'If "to turn" means "to endeavour" anywhere, why not everywhere?'[253] I will give him

* * * * *

---

[250] The Latin *paraturum* (Basel 1527 and LB) seems to be Erasmus' correction of *paratura*, which appears in *De servo arbitrio*.

[251] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 681:35–682:4 / LW 33 134

[252] *A Discussion* CWE 76 35

[253] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 682:1–4 / LW 33 134

tit for tat.[254] If a person who is not of sound mind is said to be furious, why does it not mean the same thing when Scripture attributes fury to God? If someone who is angry has boiling blood around his heart, why do we not think the same thing applies to God when Scripture says God is angry? If a person who has compassion feels distress, why do we not attribute distress to God? Now even if I had quite definitely interpreted 'turn to me' to mean 'try to turn to me,' it would be far more tolerable than Luther's gloss on it: 'Keep all the commandments, none of which you can keep'![255] But these things should be numbered among the delights of reading Luther. He accuses me of saying in an unqualified way that the testimony of Jeremiah 'if you separate the precious from the worthless' indicates the freedom to choose, as if I attribute complete freedom to the will apart from grace.[256] But Luther should have remembered here what is said in *A Discussion* hundreds of times. Why was it necessary to say the same thing over and over whenever I cite a text, as if I were talking to schoolboys, not theologians – to say nothing of Luther, who never forgets, who is never puzzled, whom nothing ever escapes?

But finally he says goodbye to this pointless stuff – to which, however, he is always returning – and he teaches us with heroic authority that the word[257] 'turn' is used in Holy Scripture in two ways. 'As used in the Law it expresses an order or command that requires not merely an attempt but a completely changed way of living: "Let everyone turn away from his evil ways," "Turn to the Lord." For there it involves fulfilling[258] all the commands.' And what shows this to be so? 'As is sufficiently clear,' he says. 'In its evangelical usage,' he says, 'it expresses consolation and God's promises, which demand nothing of us and are offered to us by God's grace.'[259] Luther teaches us the two uses of this word. The first one, which is hyperbolic, he proves thus: 'It is sufficiently clear' – he ought to have added 'that everything is demanded, though nothing can be observed.' For what mortal ever said that turning to God means keeping all the commandments rather than the beginning of a holy life? But let it be enough for us that Luther said it.

* * * * *

---

[254] *Adagia* I i 35; see *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 222 n691.

[255] Erasmus' summary of Luther's position

[256] Jer 15:19; *A Discussion* CWE 76 35; cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 682:4–9 / LW 33 134.

[257] LB has *usum*; the transcription of Basel 1527 has *usum* corrected to *verbum*, which the sense clearly requires.

[258] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 682:10–14 / LW 33 134–5. Basel 1527 has *actionem* where Luther and LB have *exactionem*. The meaning of both is pretty much the same.

[259] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 682:9–16 / LW 33 134–5, citing Jer 18:11, 25:5, 4:1

How does he confirm the second usage? Psalm 125: 'When the Lord turned the captivity of Sion' (or, as he teaches us to say, Zion).[260] Likewise: 'Turn, my soul, to your rest.'[261] Is Luther making a serious point here? When the Lord says that he is turning, he declares his grace. Does anyone deny this? He ought to have proved that whenever the Lord says 'turn,' it is an evangelical usage. For he declared that everything cited from Isaiah is evangelical usage except for the first passage. But in the other passages, which he does not except, the expression 'turning' and similar words occur. But who is the source of this distinction of his? Nobody but him. Therefore the distinction of the ancient, orthodox Fathers is more probable: when God says 'turn' something is required from mankind, namely that it make itself available to the grace which is offered; when he says 'I will turn to you' he is promising that grace is available. This applies to the text from Jeremiah: 'If you turn, I will turn to you.'[262] Both kinds of turning are expressed here: one part signifies the action of the human will; the other, the assistance of grace. Having discussed these points so felicitously, in his ovation he admonishes the filthy sophists together with yawning *Discussion* to distinguish the usage of the Law from that of the gospel, but in doing so they must follow Luther's pointer, which cannot go wrong. But see the lengths to which he carries hyperbole: the expression 'turn' requires that we obey all the commandments of the Law, but 'I will turn' requires absolutely nothing from us, not even faith, I imagine.[263]

After this auspicious beginning he takes up the passage from Ezekiel 18[:21–2]: 'I myself live, says the Lord; I do not wish the death of the sinner, etc.'[264] Notice, my dear reader, the impudence of the man. The words of mine that he cites read thus: 'In this chapter the phrases "he turned," "he did," "he performed" constantly recur, in both a good and a bad sense. And where are those who claim that man does nothing, but is only passive to the action of grace?'[265] This is what *Discussion* says. Now listen to Luther: 'See, I beg you, the extraordinary chain of reasoning. She was supposed to prove the endeavour and the effort, and she proves the complete deed, with

* * * * *

[260] Pss 125:1 and 13:7. Erasmus twits Luther for using the spelling 'Zion' instead of the usual 'Sion' (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 682:16–18 / LW 33 135).

[261] Ps 114:7; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 682:14–18 / LW 33 135, where Luther refers (inaccurately) to Ps 22

[262] Jer 15:19

[263] Zech 1:3 (see 401 above); *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 682:18–25 / LW 33 135

[264] Here Erasmus combines Ezek 18:3 and 32, but in *A Discussion* he quotes Ezek 18:21–3; in both passages the sense is similar.

[265] *A Discussion* CWE 76 35

everything accomplished by free will. I ask you, where are the people now who require grace and the Spirit? For he prattles away, saying: Ezekiel says, "If a wicked man turns away and does what is right and lawful, he will live"; therefore the wicked man immediately does so and can do so. Ezekiel expresses what should be done; *Discussion* understands it to mean that it is being done and has been done, once again teaching us by this new grammar that "to owe" means the same as "to have," "to be required" means "to be performed," "to demand" the same as "to pay."'[266] This is literally what Luther says. After that can anyone be surprised that I did not reply to him point by point? What can you respond to such drunken nonsense, to such patent falsehood and malice? This genuine Leviathan added 'immediately has been done' and 'is immediately had' on his own, not only shamelessly but also mindlessly. I infer that it can be done, though only with the help of grace. With similar shamelessness he added that the human will can do everything without grace, although this passage, which he thoughtlessly reports, excludes only the opinion of those who teach that mankind can do nothing at all for his good but is merely passive to the operation of grace. He does not realize this, even though *Discussion* mentioned Karlstadt by name. If someone who writes this way is sober, then I never saw a drunk. He is equally sober when he sets one side over against the other as if they were completely contradictory: 'Where are those who deny that the human will can do anything but say it is merely passive' and 'Where are those, I ask you, who require grace and the Holy Spirit'[267] – as if it could never happen that the powers of nature should act together with the action of grace. But he himself confesses, I think, that in all the actions of nature the first cause acts principally but together with secondary causes.[268] Nor has anyone disproved the opinion of those who do not distinguish miracles from the ordinary processes of nature except by their rarity. But to overlook some miracles that were once performed when the time was right but have now become very rare because of the circumstances of our time, we see that in the activity of grace the Spirit of Christ always joins his action with natural feeling and powers so that what is done will not seem prodigious and repellent. For no one seeks out monstrosities; on the contrary, everyone shuns and flees from them, inclined as we are to whatever has a relationship to nature. You will find that the action of the Spirit was almost always such in the apostles and other holy men. Nor does Luther deny this.

* * * * *

---

[266] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 682:30–7 / LW 33 135–6

[267] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 682:29–30, 32–3 / LW 33 135

[268] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 30 n110 and 50 n226.

Why then does he get mixed up with a different opinion? Once again he cockadoodledoos here that we join Pelagius in proclaiming 'What can you impute to someone who can do nothing, whether good or evil?'[269] If Pelagius had proclaimed nothing more than this, he would have been orthodox. As it is, he is numbered among the heretics because he separated the action of the human will from the action of grace. But Luther flees from the Pelagian heresy in such a way that he thoughtlessly jumps from the frying pan headlong into the fire,[270] though there is a quite safe passage between the two.

Once more unhappy *Discussion* stumbles against the same stone:[271] when she cites the evidence of Ezekiel 18, 'I do not desire the death of a sinner but rather that he turn and live,'[272] she makes expressions of consolation into words of the Law.[273] For now that he has got hold of this interpretative trick, he bears down with it endlessly. If these are not the words of the Law, why did he teach earlier that the word 'turn' contains the whole Law with all its commandments?[274] He will reply that here it is to be taken according to the usage of the gospel.[275] This is simply a shameless fantasy of Luther. For he could not produce any evidence for it from Holy Scripture. It is one thing for God to promise that he will turn Sion,[276] quite another if he exhorts the sinner to be turned or to turn himself (for this expression is also found and better translates the Greek ἐπιτρέψητε). As for the text he adduces from the Psalms, 'Turn, my soul, to your rest,'[277] it tends to work against him; for whenever a person exhorts himself to contemplate heavenly things, the action of the will accommodating itself to grace is implied. What, then, does 'I do not desire the death' mean? If we accept Luther's interpretation, it is equivalent to 'I am merciful, I am not angry, I do not want to punish, I do not want you to die, I want to forgive you, I want to spare you.'[278] If God is not angry at a sinner, very many scriptural texts are lying, as when Paul writes in Romans 1, 'For the heavens reveal the anger of

* * * * *

[269] *A Discussion* CWE 76 36; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 683:4–6 / LW 33 136

[270] Literally, 'from the lime-kiln into the charcoal furnace.' See Tertullian *De carne Christi* 6.1 CCSL 2 883; Otto no 295.

[271] Otto no 916

[272] Ezek 18:23 and 32

[273] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 682:8–32 / LW 33 137

[274] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 681:11–14 / LW 33 134–5

[275] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 683:32–684:11 / LW 33 137–8

[276] See n260 above.

[277] See n261 above.

[278] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 683:19–22 / LW 33 136–7

God towards all the wickedness and injustice of mankind,' and in the next chapter, 'You treasure up for yourselves wrath on the day of wrath,' and soon after, 'wrath, indignation, tribulation, and distress against the soul of every man who does evil.'[279]

You have heard Luther's gloss; now listen to the true interpretation. 'I do not desire the death of a sinner,' that is, I do not want the sinner to persist in his vices, lest he should die. What, then, do you wish? I want him to turn from his shameful deeds and to achieve eternal life. 'These words,' he says, 'proclaim the kindness of God, which inclines to mercy.'[280] I quite agree. But by implication a person who perseveres in sin is threatened with wrath and death. To whom is life promised? To the sinner? By no means, but rather to someone who turns himself.[281] Grace impels the mind of the sinner; if he neglects it, if he closes his eyes and ears, what can you do with someone who refuses to be saved? God offers the sinner life; he offers to forget his previous sins; but he offers it to a sinner who repents: 'Stop being a sinner, and my anger will immediately be changed to mercy and death will be replaced by life.' Otherwise, if God did not desire the death of a sinner in an unqualified way, why does he throw so many thousands of sinners into hell? 'Who does not know that there are a great number of places in Scripture which testify that the extraordinary mercy of God is free, accessible, available, ready at hand?' I grant it, but it is so to those who repent. Therefore whatever consolation of that sort there is in Scripture summons us to grace, but in such a way that it nevertheless requires the sinner to change his former life. Hence it is certainly not unreasonable to infer from such texts, however much they pertain to the gospel, that free will does exist in the natural order of things – which is what Luther denies. Of this sort is the text he quotes from Exodus 20: 'I will have mercy on many thousands.' These words pertain to the gospel, I grant it. But they are followed by 'on those who love me.' Is this enough? No, he adds: 'and keep my commandments.' Luther cleverly keeps quiet about this addition as well as about what preceded: 'I am a mighty and jealous God, punishing sons for the wickedness of their fathers, to the third and fourth generation.'[282] You see that promises are joined with fearful threats, and mercy is not promised to just anyone, but rather to those who love God and keep his command-

* * * * *

[279] Rom 1:18, 2:5, 2:8–9

[280] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 683:19–22 / LW 33 136–7.

[281] Luther attributes to Erasmus this opinion, which he himself rejects (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 683:28–32 / LW 33 137).

[282] Exod 20:5–6; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 683:16–17 / LW 33 136

ments. I have already spoken about what he quotes from Matthew 11[:28]: 'Come to me all of you.'[283] Of the same sort is the text in Paul: 'You who are asleep, get up and rise from the dead and Christ will shine upon you.'[284] 'Get up' and 'rise' are expressions of impelling grace; 'Christ will shine upon you,' of consolation and promises. Since, however, all orthodox interpreters agree that the dead whom the Lord called back to life present us with a type of the sinner who repents and turns to holiness, I think it is not without mysterious meaning that the Lord never aroused anyone without first calling upon him, a practice which was not, however, followed by the apostles. In Luke 7[:14] he said to the young man, 'Young man, I say to you arise.' In Mark 5[:41] he called upon the daughter of the president of the synagogue: '*Talitha cumi,* that is, Child, I say to you arise.' In this passage those skilled in Hebrew advise us that *cumi* is a doubly conjugated verb, as if you should say 'raise yourself up.'[285] Similarly, he also called out to the brother of Martha, 'Lazarus, come out.'[286] Hence Luther is wrong when he infers that the power of free will is not confirmed by the words of the Law or the words of the gospel, since I have made it clear that it is proved by both.

But what did my *Discussion* infer from the words 'I do not desire the death of the sinner'? That a commandment is being given which is to be kept? Quite the contrary, *Discussion* reasoned as follows: 'Does the Lord in his goodness lament for the death of his people when he himself caused them to die? If he does not desire our death, surely we must impute it to our will if we perish.'[287] Luther deliberately overlooks these words and obscures the matter with much convoluted verbiage, presenting us with new laws which he fashions and refashions at his whim. 'An expression of

* * * * *

[283] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 683:15–16 / LW 33 136; see 400 above.

[284] Ephes 5:14

[285] Erasmus seems to refer to the fact that Hebrew (and Aramaic) verbs have multiple conjugations. *Cumi* belongs to the *pi'ēl* conjugation, the fundamental idea of which is 'to busy oneself eagerly with the action indicated by the stem'; see *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* ed E. Kautzsch, trans A.E. Cowley (Oxford 1910) 141. Strictly speaking the phrase *talitha cumi* is Aramaic, not Hebrew, as Erasmus was aware (see his *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* LB VI 171 on Mark 5:41), but 'Hebrew' was sometimes used loosely to include Aramaic. I have not been able to discover any written commentary on Mark 5:41 which refers to the conjugation of *cumi*, but Erasmus had friends and acquaintances (such as Reuchlin and Oecolampadius) who knew Hebrew. A search of the data base of the entire *Patrologia Latina* does not reveal any remarks about the grammatical character of *cumi.*

[286] John 11:43

[287] *A Discussion* CWE 76 35–6

the Law is directed only at those who do not feel or recognize their sins. So too, an expression of grace comes only to those who feel their sins, are afflicted by them, and are tempted to despair.'[288] We utterly reject those hyperbolic laws of his. Quite the contrary, the Law enlightens well-disposed people so that they do not fall into sin; and words of promise are very often spoken to a rebellious people who turn God's kindness to them into a licence to sin. And the commandment 'Love the Lord, your God etc'[289] does not indicate that we ought to perform something that we cannot do but rather admonishes us that God is to be preferred before all creatures and that we should always make progress in loving him – which is within the power of mankind with the help of grace.

And so there is nothing left for Luther to do but to triumph, if we will only concede to him that 'I do not desire the death of the sinner' means 'I am not angry with the sinner, but I want him to turn,' that is, 'not observe any of the commandments, which cannot be observed, but merely accept grace and do whatever he wants.' How, then, does he triumph? He reckons that no passage can be cited which teaches more clearly that free will, itself being alone, does nothing but get worse and worse unless God with such great gentleness offers it the mercy he has in store for it.[290] What does Luther mean when he says 'itself being alone'? Does anyone teach that free will can do anything effectively to reach justification apart from grace? When it adapts itself – or, if you prefer, makes itself available – to impelling grace, it is not alone. Then again, what does he mean when he says 'get worse and worse'? His own teaching, on the other hand, is that free will is no more than an empty name and that it cannot do anything at all, whether for good or evil, that it does not act with grace or without it[291] but is acted upon by God. In some places he attributes free will to mankind in lesser matters; in other places he denies that a person can pick up a straw from the ground by the force of free will.[292] Such is the consistency of the man who so often charges me with not sticking to the issue at hand. But to pass over the rest of his empty babble,[293] what does

* * * * *

---

[288] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 684:3–7 / LW 33 137

[289] Matt 22:37 (Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27)

[290] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 684:14–21 / LW 33 138

[291] The Basel 1527 edition has *alter sine gratia*; LB has *aut sine gratia*. Perhaps we should read *nec sine gratia* to match the preceding *nec cum gratia*.

[292] See *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 193–4 and n524.

[293] The original here transliterates *βαττολογίαν* into Latin as *battologiam*; cf *Adagia* II i 92.

Luther mean when he says, 'unless you believe God is so frivolous that he pours forth words of promise so copiously not because they are needed for our salvation but because he takes sheer delight in loquacity.'[294] What new sort of eloquence is this? Doesn't this clause seem to mean that the numerous passages in Scripture where God summons sinners to repentance contribute nothing to our salvation but that God was thus pleased to babble away out of frivolity and garrulity?[295] But if he had said 'unless you do believe,' perhaps his language might have seemed less absurd.[296] We do not believe this, my good man. Quite the contrary, we are fully persuaded that God achieves the same goal by threats and alarms together with blandishments and promises, that is, to overcome our hardness of heart and to lead us to amendment, except that according to the outcome of his overtures he is more likely to frighten the headstrong and haughty with threats and afflictions while he summons with blandishments those who tend to despair. If the haughty are converted he ceases to threaten; if the others draw back from despair he promises that grace is available to them if they receive him. But with this proviso: that the human will makes some contribution to the conversion of those who are admonished by threats or summoned by promises. Otherwise, why are some converted and others harden their hearts all the more?

[*The secret and revealed wills of God*]

Here Luther has discovered another piece of sophistry in order to exclude all action on the part of the human will: God's secret will in such matters is not to be inquired into but to be worshipped. Once again he has an axe to cut through all knotty questions.[297] I do not deny that in some matters God's will acts in such a way that we should adore rather than scrutinize his counsel; but here I am arguing from Scripture that there is something inherent in the human will which is of such great moment that one person,

* * * * *

[294] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 684:22–4 / LW 33 138

[295] That is, since Luther claimed that God's commandments cannot be kept, they contribute nothing to salvation and thus constitute mere loquacity on God's part

[296] Luther's sentence can be epitomized as follows: God's promises show that free will is impotent unless you should believe that God was merely babbling. Erasmus seems to mean that the use of the subjunctive *credas* 'you should believe, happen to believe, may believe' leaves open the possibility of thinking God is a babbler, whereas the indicative *credis* 'you do believe' would have eliminated that possibility.

[297] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 684:32–40 / LW 33 138–9; *Adagia* I i 6

when he is touched by grace, turns to it and is saved, another person turns away and perishes. But if nothing is to be imputed to the human will, but only God's will matters, why does God complain so often in Scripture that he has not been listened to, neither when he commands nor when he coaxes, neither when he frightens nor when he flatters? How can he be so shameless as to cry out 'Why will you die, O house of Israel'[298] when their death occurs because of his secret will, which must be adored?

Here we are presented with the distinction between God as he is preached and God as he is in his own nature,[299] to make it seem by novel language that Luther is introducing something never heard of up to now, whereas this very commonplace distinction can be used to answer the question how God does not wish the death of a sinner and yet wishes it: he does not wish it by his signified will[300] and he does wish it by his effective will; or he wishes and does not wish it conditionally, that is, he does not wish it if the person himself wishes to turn away from sin and he does wish it if the sinner does not wish to repent. But in fact we have already excluded this distinction between God preached and God not preached, for we are inferring what God's will is as it is expressed for us in Holy Scripture;[301] we adore that secret will hidden in its darkness, we do not examine it. But since he croaks away at us so often about God preached and not preached, to keep from seeming to have made this gloss up out of his own head, he cites for us Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2[:4], where he is speaking about the Antichrist: 'He is lifted up above everything which is called god and which is worshipped.' This newfangled exegete takes 'what is called and what is worshipped' to mean 'God preached.' He did not repeat the words of Paul out of his own head, I agree, but he fabricated out of his own brain an interpretation that is both forced and inconsistent. First of all, what ancient interpreter ever dreamed what Luther brings up? Did Jerome, did Ambrose or Chrysostom or Theophylact or Augustine or Bede or Thomas?[302]

* * * * *

[298] Ezek 18:31, 33:11

[299] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 685:1–5 / LW 33 139

[300] Latin *voluntate signi*, God's revealed will for his creation; see Oberman *Harvest* 476 and Peter Lombard *Sententiae* I dist 45.7–12 PL 192 643–4.

[301] *A Discussion* CWE 76 50–1 and nn227, 230

[302] None of these exegetes agree with Luther in applying 2 Thess 2:4 to the distinction between God's revealed and his hidden will. All apply it to the Antichrist's claim to divine worship. See Jerome Ep 121.11 CSEL 55 53:18–23; Ambrose *Expositio psalmi CXVIII* 3.34 CSEL 62 60:20–7; Chrysostom *In epistolam secundam ad Thessalonicenses commentarius* 3.2 PG 62 482; Theophylact *Expositio in epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses* (on 2 Thess 2:4) PG 124 1339; Augustine *Enarra-*

Theophylact takes the text to mean that Antichrist will abolish the worship of idols so that he alone might be considered as god, noting also that Antichrist will not say he is God but will strive by his deeds to be considered as god.[303] But Luther scorns the interpretations of the ancient Fathers. Therefore let us examine this new interpretation of his in the light of the language of Paul, whose words he deliberately does not report lest they immediately betray how shameless his interpretation is. First of all, he interprets 'what is called and worshipped as God' as meaning 'God not as he is but as he has become known to us.' I ask Luther whether someone who adores God can rightly be said to worship him. He will grant it, I think. But a little before he himself said that that secret will, that is, the divine nature as it is, should be adored with the deepest veneration, and here he explains the matter differently.[304] Quite the contrary, we worship most profoundly that ineffable, unknowable, and inscrutable nature of God. And lest Luther should seek to evade the difficulty here, the translation 'what is worshipped' is σέβασμα in Greek, derived from σέβομαι, which means 'I venerate religiously something which is full of majesty.' Moreover, since Luther here mentions the Corycian cavern where the majesty of the deity overwhelms human knowledge, the passage about it primarily concerns adoration.[305] Furthermore, phrases separated by Paul are joined together by Luther, who says 'what is called and worshipped as God,' whereas Paul's words are 'over everything which is called God or which is worshipped.' The Greek reads as follows: ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα, that is, 'above everyone who is called God or anything else worthy of religious veneration,' so that we understand σέβασμα to mean the shrines or idols of the gentiles. For the phrase 'what is called' refers separately to each element, to God and to the noun σέβασμα, which was paraphrased by the translator as 'what is worshipped.' Paul added 'what is called' precisely to show both that those who are called gods are not gods and that what are called *sebasmata* are not *sebasmata*. For Paul never applies the name God to anyone except the true God; or if he applies it to others, he adds something to let us know he is speaking of those who are falsely held to be gods, as when he says 'the god of this

* * * * *

tiones in psalmos 82.3, 8–10 CCSL 39 1141; Bede *Homiliarum evangelii libri duo* 2.3 CCSL 122 204:153–6; Thomas Aquinas *Summa theologiae* III q 8 a 8.

[303] See the preceding note.

[304] That is, Luther earlier said God's secret will should be adored, but here he says that God's signified or preached will should be worshipped or adored.

[305] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 684:37–40 / LW 33 139; on the Corycian cave see *A Discussion* CWE 76 9 and n17.

world';[306] and 1 Corinthians 8[:5], 'for although there are those who are called gods,' using the same word 'called' to signify that here too he is speaking of false gods. Paul also uses the same word, σέβασμα, in Luke's Acts: 'For as I went along looking at your statues, I also found an altar on which was written "to the unknown god."' What is translated as 'statues' is σεβάσματα in the Greek, a word that includes temples and altars and shrines and sanctuaries and statues. And Luther explains the same word here as 'God as he is worshipped.' But wait a minute, my dear reader, you have not yet heard all the trickery Luther employs in this interpretation. He craftily inverts the word order.[307] Everyone knows that it makes a great deal of difference whether you say 'This craftsman is much spoken of' or 'This man is much spoken of as a craftsman,' for the second expression implies he is said 'to be,' whereas the first does not. In the first phrase the person who is a craftsman is said to be famous; in the second someone is said to be a craftsman who may not be one. Now if Paul had put 'god' and *sebasma* before the phrase 'is called,' the meaning would at any rate have been ambiguous.[308] As it is, since both nouns follow the verb, there can be no other meaning except that there are those who are called gods although they are not and that there are *sebasmata* that are called so although they are not.[309] In brief, I have shown you how conscientiously, how knowledgeably, how trustworthily Luther treats Holy Scripture for us, scorning all exegetes, whether ancient or modern; I trust this will make it quite clear to everyone how much credit we should give him in other places.

In fact, there was no need for such a distinction concerning God's will, because both the signified will and the effective will wish the sinner, if he persists, to go to hell. This distinction would have been appropriate if someone had argued as follows: if whatever God wishes happens, why do not all sinners change their ways? By the signified will he wishes that all do so, but not by his effective will. He could make it happen if he willed it in an unqualified way. And so whenever Luther is hard pressed by arguments he will take refuge in that inscrutable will of God and will make him

* * * * *

---

[306] 2 Cor 4:4

[307] The Vulgate reading of 2 Thess 2:4 is 'omne quod dicitur Deus aut colitur.' Luther paraphrases 'omnem Deum praedicatum et cultum ... supra Deum, quatenus est praedicatus et cultus ... (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 685:9–10).

[308] That is, if Paul had said 'the god or the cult object that is spoken of,' he might have implied that he was speaking of the true God or a genuine cult object.

[309] The Latin is somewhat strained because it implies but does not state 'that are called so.'

God not preached where we assert God preached. It is very difficult to fight with this man, who does not recognize the laws of anyone else and time and again prescribes so many unheard-of laws for us. He demands that we grant there is a certain inscrutable will of God. We do so. He wants it to be adored. We adore it. What follows from this? Therefore Luther's paradoxes are true. What paradoxes? That all of Scripture is full of commandments, threats, promises, and blandishments, but the minds of mankind are not moved by any of them except when God wishes to impart sanctifying grace individually to some of them; that the laws and threats only point out sin; that the promises and blandishments only point out that grace is available; that nevertheless, because the will of good and bad alike is in no way free, neither the conferral of grace nor the thrust of the Law does them any good unless God draws both groups to salvation by his will, which it is wrong to speak about. And yet guilt is imputed to those who can do nothing of themselves, just as if they could; and they are condemned without deserving it – as he later candidly confesses – so that God may not seem unjust; and those who have not deserved anything, indeed have not even tried to deserve anything, are given immortality. But nevertheless, at the same time God is said to be absolutely just, even though it is characteristic of justice to give rewards which are deserved. But here he has another paradox: that faith has entirely perished unless God seems to be absolutely unjust but is believed to be absolutely just.[310] This is the person who charges that I turn an indefinite proposition into a universal![311] God commands what we cannot perform or wish to perform but are nevertheless bound to perform; and he imputes guilt to our will, which was corrupted not by us but by our first parents, and he imputes it also to the justified. But why does he blame us for what we cannot perform and he does not wish to change? Luther calls upon God not preached and is off the hook![312]

Cockadoodledooing once again, he charges that I have forgotten the question at issue and prove something other than what I proposed.[313] When I am about to cite evidence from Scripture, I begin as follows: '... in the hope that truth may everywhere prevail, shining forth, it may be, from this discussion of Scripture like fire from the percussion of flints. First of all, it cannot be denied that there are many passages in Holy Scripture which

* * * * *

[310] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 633:7–23 / LW 33 62–3

[311] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 673:28–33 / LW 33 121

[312] In this paragraph Erasmus has been refuting Luther's argument in *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 685:25–687:13 / LW 33 140.

[313] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 686:14–26 / LW 33 141

clearly seem to support the freedom of the human will; and on the other hand, some which seem to deny it completely. Yet it is certain that Scripture cannot contradict itself, since it all proceeds from the same Spirit. And so we shall first review those which confirm our opinion; then we shall attempt to explain those which seem to oppose it.'[314] This is the opening of the argument from scriptural passages in *A Discussion*. Now if the passages did not clearly establish free will and did not clearly eliminate it, still I would have fulfilled my obligation in the argument. Thus in the arguments of 'the preliminary opposition,'[315] as the scholastics say, theologians sometimes cite and draw conclusions from texts on either side, and in the end they settle the matter by balancing the scale of truth. Having cited one passage, I go right on to recount various opinions about free will. Some I reject, but in such a way as to make it clear that I have no quarrel with them; some I indicate are not to be rejected, but they are such that if one of them wins out, Luther's teaching is defeated. To these taken together I apply the evidence I bring forth from Scripture. I make no attempt to conceal the opinions with which I particularly have to disagree; against them taken together I hurl the weapons of debate. And what do I say in this place? These passages must all be pointless once you posit necessity either in good deeds or bad.[316] When I say this am I attributing everything to free will or rather excluding the opinion of Wyclif, which Luther in the heat of the argument approves of in *Assertion*,[317] though it is inconsistent of him to do so? Therefore *Discussion* does not frequently 'blunder on one string' – or 'strynge' as his codex has it – but Luther all too frequently blunders in his heart.[318]

Finally, skipping over a good deal,[319] he takes up that text in Deuteronomy 30[:11–14]: 'The commandment that I lay upon you this day is not above you, nor is it far away, etc.' Here this Braggadocchio[320] triumphs, giving us a grammar lesson on the meaning of 'above,' 'below,' 'in front of,' 'behind,'

---

[314] *A Discussion* CWE 76 21

[315] See n172 above.

[316] *A Discussion* CWE 76 36–8

[317] *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 146:4–9 / CWE 76 306

[318] The word-play cannot be captured in English. Erasmus means that in *De servo arbitrio* Luther quoted Horace (*Ars poetica* 355–6) as *eadem corda oberret* 'blunders on the same string,' where *chorda* is the more correct spelling. Erasmus goes on to use *corde* 'heart,' where *c* without *h* is the correct spelling.

[319] Luther ignores *A Discussion* 'and so too ... merit of our faith' (CWE 76 36–7).

[320] Latin *miles gloriosus* 'boastful soldier,' the title of a play by Plautus

'on the right,' 'on the left.'[321] I said that these words signify a propensity to keeping the commandments, arguing, not making any pronouncement;[322] and if I had done so, what danger would there be in that, since our Lord himself says in the Gospel, 'My yoke is easy and my burden light'?[323] But Luther exclaims: 'What need now for Christ? What need now for the Holy Spirit? How foolish it was for Christ, by shedding his blood, to purchase for us a Spirit we do not need, so that we might become more ready to keep the commandments, when we are already so by nature.' And he babbles away about many other things of this ilk, always separating grace from free will[324] – for I formerly begged leave to use this common expression[325] – whereas in so many places I have coupled grace with free will[326] in order that the human will might be effective. He pretends not to notice the phrase added here by *Discussion*: 'if none of this is in our power in any way at all.'[327] A person who says 'in any way at all' is not attributing everything to free will. What makes the commandment difficult? A will that is lazy. What makes it easy? Grace and a well-disposed will. He says that 'above' here must not be referred to our power but rather to a place, in accord with grammar, as even boys in grammar school know.[328] To be sure. Therefore what is above us is on the roof; what is below us is in the wine cellar. Quite the contrary, even among boys in grammar school, 'above,' 'below,' 'far,' 'near' refer more often to dignity or ability than to a spatial position. When Ovid writes, 'However crushed I am and fallen even lower than you, than whom nothing could be lower,'[329] does he mean that he was lying under the feet of the person, who was himself prostrate under the feet of all persons? Again, when we say, 'You are far from him whom you are trying to imitate,' is the person addressed standing in a place far removed in distance from the other person?

* * * * *

[321] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 687:22–6 / LW 33 142–3
[322] *A Discussion* CWE 76 37
[323] Matt 11:30
[324] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 686:34–687:11 / LW 33 141–2
[325] See 338–9 above.
[326] The word *cui* 'with which' (ie free will) has been supplied here to make better syntax and sense. It is not present in the Basel 1527 edition or LB.
[327] *A Discussion* CWE 76 38
[328] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 687:24–9 / LW 33 143
[329] Ovid *Tristia* 5.8.1–2; Erasmus omits the beginning of the sentence in Ovid ('Non adeo cecidi') and reads 'et ... sum' for 'ut ... sim,' perhaps because he is quoting from memory but probably because he is adapting the quotation to his context.

Likewise, when a person says, 'You are getting close to the truth,' does he mean that the distance is short? When you read in the Gospel, 'He is above everyone,'[330] do you understand that Christ surpasses everyone in dignity or that he is located in the highest place? So much for the grammar Luther teaches us. But let us grant, what is the case, that Moses is indeed using figurative language but nevertheless he does so to signify that the commandment is presented to them so as to be ready at hand, not far to seek. What is the thrust of what Moses says except to deprive the people of any excuse if they fail to observe what is commanded? That is the meaning which Paul also assigns to this text in Romans 10[:6–9], if we are to believe Chrysostom and Theophylact.[331] And even if that were not what Moses meant, I would still have a debater's right to twist the words in my favour. For what is ready at hand is certainly easier to get than what must be sought elsewhere.

Now let us look at Luther's interpretation. 'Moses,' he says, 'testifies that he has done his duty, has laid down a law in which there is nothing that anyone can observe, so that they would have no reason to remonstrate with Moses, who has done what he was ordered to do, but rather with God, who imposed such a harsh law on his people, a law which they were required to keep unless they preferred to perish; and yet the one who commanded that the law be kept knew that none of them could carry it out.'[332] I imagine Moses was not unaware of this, since he dealt with the people in such lengthy speeches, binding them with so many solemn obligations and ceremonies, for no other reason than to deceive them and lure them into a pit, so that once they have fallen they may know that they cannot perform what is demanded of them. Luther elegantly makes it clear that Moses is excused, but he shamelessly adds that the people have no excuse, and even more shamelessly invents a God who commands, demands, inculcates so many things that cannot be observed at all, frightening them all the while, threatening them, destroying them. Meanwhile he re-echoes his dogma at us. But that is the very reason we are protesting against him! I have demonstrated that his proof from Paul's 'Through the Law comes knowledge of sin' is harsh, absurd, and incoherent.[333] 'In these words of Moses,' he says, 'where is there any mention of free will?'[334] I did not say

* * * * *

[330] John 3:31

[331] Chrysostom *Commentarius in epistolam ad Romanos* 17.2 PG 60 566; Theophylact *Expositio in epistolam ad Romanos* 10.4–9 PG 124 475–8.

[332] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 687:37–688:8 / LW 33 143–4

[333] See 357–68 above.

[334] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 688:8–10 / LW 33 144

it is mentioned but rather that the words clearly imply that the human will can do something, and that if it fails to do its part it is condemned through its own fault, and that if it does its part with the help of grace it is saved. We have already heard that cockadoodledoo of his many times: that words of command, demanding, threatening, exhorting do not establish a deed or the power to do anything; but from such words, according to the common sense to which Luther earlier gave the final decision in interpreting Holy Scripture,[335] we can infer some such power. We make the same reply to his quibble about subjunctive, optative, and imperative verbs, and about indicative verbs used in an imperative sense:[336] they do not establish a deed or the power to do anything, but they do indicate some power, unless the person who issued the commands is either stupid or insane or tyrannical. As for the inscrutable will, just as I grant that it is sometimes relevant, so too I distinctly deny that it is relevant to these numerous commandments. I care nothing about asseverations; I require Scripture and arguments.

In this passage he sings his own praises. 'Let *Discussion* now go on,' he says, 'and tell us how it can be that a single, private person sees what the leading figures of so many ages have not seen.'[337] What has he taught that is worthy of a triumph? 'Above' and 'below,' 'far' and 'near' are adverbs of place. But he neglects to say that they are most frequently applied to dignity, likeness, or ability, and the Apostle uses them in that way. But if Luther does not want to depart in any way from the literal use of words, how did the people have the commandment in their mouths as Moses explained it? Rather it was in his mouth and in their ears. But how could it be in their hearts, since many opposed the Law? Paul interprets 'in their hearts' to mean 'by faith' and 'in their mouths' to mean 'by professing it.'[338] And these very words 'to have it in their mouths,' 'to have it in their hearts,' however you interpret them, indicate figuratively that the people can readily observe them if they want to. Indeed, since grace was available, they understood what they were told, they remembered it, they recited it with their mouths, so that there was nothing left to do but to manifest it in their deeds. And here he never stops croaking away at us about the issue and the probable opinion and the full power of the human will apart from grace,[339] not considering that anyone will read my *Discussion* and catch him out in

* * * * *

[335] See n67 above.

[336] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 688:11–26 / LW 33 144.

[337] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 687:34–6 / LW 33 143

[338] Rom 10:10

[339] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 688:21–5 / LW 33 144

his malicious lies. What can you do with a debater who repeats these things in each section, thrusts them in over and over, hammers away at them, so that out of very weariness we are put off from replying to them? God does not wish to seem cruel and unjust on the one hand and to be believed to be just and merciful on the other. Quite the contrary, he has revealed to us many indications of his supreme justice and clemency, so that when we have seen such evidence we may believe them in other matters where our intellect cannot attain to the counsels of divine providence.

[*New Testament passages: necessity and the hidden will of God*]

Up till now he imagines he has strenuously driven back what has been brought forward from the Old Testament, and he promises he will use the same weapons to drive back whatever has been or can be brought forward from other places in Scripture. What weapons? Some paradoxes, with which I am at war, and some lies. One of the lies is that I propose one thing and defend something else. If a debater uses arguments to wrest from his opponent more than he himself had proposed to gain, his opponent is dispatched all the more thoroughly, just as if someone fighting with a prince over one citadel should drive him out of the whole kingdom. Nevertheless, his accusation is false: for free will is never separated from grace. A second lie is this: he pretends time and again that I propose only one opinion, whereas I propose at least three, none of which I reject.[340] A third lie is this: whenever the human will is said to be able to do anything, he says it follows that it can do everything by its own power – just as if someone who said to a boy who is innately intelligent and has a suitable tutor, 'You can turn out to be a learned man if you want to,' would mean that the boy could do so without any help from his tutor or any study on his part. And he repeats this so often that if I refuted it every time my book would have no end. I will pass over his jesting buffoonery about the battleline of flies and the Achilles of such an army.[341] The Egyptians experienced what flies can do.[342] I too have a store of similar jests, but I have neither the time nor the inclination to indulge in buffoonery, even though these witless sallies land not

* * * * *

[340] Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 27–33. Apart from Pelagius' doctrine, which he naturally rejects as heretical, Erasmus presents four opinions: those of Augustine, the scholastics, Karlstadt, and Luther. The last two of these he rejects, so that there are only two, not three, which are not rejected by Erasmus.

[341] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 688:27–689:1 / LW 33 144–5; Luther taunts reason and her inferences as an Achilles leading flies for troops.

[342] Exod 8:24

so much on me as on the most commended Doctors of the church and especially on Augustine, on whose authority he boasts that he bases his teaching. With what weapons, then, does he eliminate the Achilles of the flies, Matthew 23[:37]: 'How often I wished to gather your sons together, and you refused'? From this text I reasoned as follows: 'If everything happens by necessity, why blame our will, which Luther claims is non-existent'?[343] He replies that the probable opinion holds that free will can do nothing without grace and that this passage teaches the omnipotence of grace. I reply: wrong on both counts. For the arguments are not directed at only one opinion, and my point here is not to confirm my opinion but to refute Luther's necessity. My words show this: 'If everything,' I say, 'happens by necessity.' If this fly refutes sheer necessity, whether in the pious or the wicked, a necessity that Luther asserts and that all the orthodox have always abhorred, hasn't it fought well enough? It does not 'prove that the will is free and capable of doing anything the prophets have said,'[344] but rather that, with the help of the grace which is available, it can contribute something by its own powers to fulfilling what has been commanded.

But here he comes back to those two Gods of his – a notion in which he takes great pleasure: changing his language, he now calls one of them incarnate and crucified; the other he calls awe-inspiring, whereas formerly he had said 'to be adored, not worshipped,'[345] as if someone who adores God in the Spirit were not worshipping him. For he teaches that God mentioned here, whom he takes to mean God as preached, is to be identified with the God worshipped, meaning that the other God is indeed adored but not preached or worshipped. These are not flies but neologistic monsters which Luther has arbitrarily generated out of his own brain, and he admonishes us to leave the one God alone in his light, since we are disputing only about the crucified God. Who, then, was that God whose wisdom the Apostle spoke of secretly among the perfect, while among the weak he knew nothing except 'Jesus Christ, and him crucified'?[346] And what about what he says elsewhere: 'The Spirit examines all things, even the very depths of God'?[347] By their natural powers the philosophers saw into the invisible things of God; they knew his sempiternal power and divinity, and yet Luther wants those who have drunk in the heavenly Spirit to leave that

* * * * *

[343] *A Discussion* CWE 76 39
[344] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 689:7–8 / LW 33 145
[345] See 411–14 above.
[346] 1 Cor 2:6–7, 2; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 689:18–31 / LW 33 145–6
[347] 1 Cor 2:10

God alone in his hiding place! It is right to examine God in every possible way: from created things, from Scripture, from the insights of the Spirit, from our experience. Of course, I grant that there is a limit to our scrutiny while we are still pilgrims in these weak bodies of ours.[348] Nor is the limit the same for everyone; everyone has his own gifts. But come, let us discuss the crucified God. Have we not brought forth his words? He spoke as one human being to another, that is, in a human fashion, and we interpret his words according to common sense. In the same way a physician would speak to a sick man who is dying because he refuses to obey his trustworthy advice; in this way a father would speak to his ne'er-do-well son. What angel taught Luther that the crucified God speaks one way, that the God 'who dwells in light inaccessible'[349] wills something else? Let Luther himself leave that God alone whom he does not want us to touch upon. Why does he bring forth and assert his counsel as if he were living with him?

I confess that God was sent to do and say everything that pertains to the salvation of mankind; I confess that all of this did not do any good for many, and that many turned out the worse for it. Thus far we are agreed. What is the nub of the controversy? We attribute the failure to what earlier actions deserved or to the human will's turning away from the grace offered, but Luther wants to ascribe it to the secret will whereby God 'deliberately abandons some and condemns other to perish.' And we should not ask why he does this but should stand in awe of the God who can do such things and wills to do them.[350] Would that Luther had at least added 'and wills it justly, though the reasons are not known to us.' But he is delighted by paradoxes. Let us consider once more where we agree and where we do not. We agree that there is a certain secret will of God which is inscrutable to us. We agree that there are certain things the reasons for which we should not and cannot examine. But we do not agree that in all the commandments, all the promises, threats, terrors, expostulations, and blandishments this will should only be adored like a deus ex machina.[351] If Luther had said that some persons, by a special volition of God, are either condemned or drawn to him, it would have been more tolerable. As it is, what I oppose is his dogma that all who are saved and all who perish do so not by their own fault, not by what they deserve, but rather by sheer necessity

* * * * *

[348] 2 Cor 5:6–7
[349] 1 Tim 6:16
[350] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 689:33–690:2 / LW 33 146
[351] *Adagia* I i 68

in so far as they themselves are concerned,[352] whereas something quite different is meant by the words of the crucified God; though he sometimes concealed the inscrutable will of the Father, certainly he never deceived us, and he never said anything which contradicts that will which is only to be adored. Christ promises salvation if we will to come to him, clearly showing that we are to blame if we are not saved. But the secret will attributes nothing to the human will but either saves or destroys forever a person driven by necessity. And yet Peter denied that God has any respect for persons.[353] When reason reaches its outer limit, then let it be permissible to have recourse to that only to be adored will as if it were a sheet anchor.[354] What need is there for that here, where there is ready at hand a probable reason, in keeping with nature, why some should perish and others be saved? If someone posits that there are human beings living in the wilderness where they could not hear of the gospel, we could raise the question of the secret will. Luther is not dealing with such people but rather with those who have heard the gospel and refused to obey it. But Luther would do anything to avoid giving up his dogma. This is the knot he was supposed to untie. As for his offering the excuse that the incarnate God was also revealed to the Jews,[355] I am not at all reluctant to grant him that, for it has nothing to do with the question.

He comes nearer to the mark when he adds that it could be objected, as I have already done, that he has recourse to this will which is to be adored, not examined, to elude the nub of the question, which he cannot resolve. Here he answers: 'This is not my invention, but a commandment confirmed by Holy Scripture. For in Romans 11 Paul writes: "Why then does God complain? Who can resist his will, etc?" and "Does not the potter have the power, etc?"'[356] I will handle this passage later at the proper time, and I handled it in *A Discussion*.[357] For now, I will say only this: if Paul, before he came to these words, was teaching that no influence at all is inherent in our will, either for good or for bad, Luther is right to cite this passage. But if in what precedes and what follows the Apostle makes it clear that something is inherent in us to make us saved or damned, Luther should seek out other scriptural evidence. This is what comes before: 'Do you not know that the goodness of God has led you to penance? But, according to the hardness of your hearts, etc.' And soon after we hear 'persistence in doing good.' After that comes: 'But the goodness of God will remain in you if you remain in goodness; otherwise you too will be cut off and those others, if they do not persist in disbelief, will be grafted in.' After that comes: 'I beg you, then, my brothers, to present your bodies, etc.'[358] Are these the words of someone who attributes nothing at all to the human will but rather refers everything to sheer necessity? Why, then, does Paul tell the person to be silent? Not because he responded but because he did so obstinately and irreverently. To those who inquire with simplicity God deigns to respond. But why, according to the counsels of divine providence, the Jews, to whom God was promised, by whom he was expected, to whom he was presented, were rejected – that is, allowed to fail when he could have prevented it – and why the gentiles, who were quite alienated from God, were suddenly accepted and received into the grace of the gospel, although he could have left them in their wickedness, God does not wish us to inquire beyond what is enough for us. And even so, he does not forbid this scrutiny to one and all but only to those who argue irreverently and are incapable of understanding this mystery. Have the very many persons who do not accept this necessity of yours and attribute something to free will never seen this passage? But I will deal with this more fully later.[359]

---

[352] That is, the necessity applies to them, not to God

[353] 1 Pet 1:17

[354] *Adagia* I i 24. A sheet anchor is one used by sailors as a last recourse in a storm.

[355] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 690:2–8 / LW 33 146

[356] Rom 9:19–21; Erasmus quotes Luther's wrong reference without correcting it.

[357] CWE 76 54–6, and 548–58 below.

See now, reader, how aptly a passage in Isaiah 58[:2] is cited by Luther,[360] who draws evidence from Holy Scripture with unfailing learning and appositeness, is never at a loss, never goes astray, never dozes off. In Isaiah God speaks as follows: 'For they seek me day after day, and they want to know my ways, like a people who have done what is just and not abandoned the judgment of God. They ask me to judge that they are just, and they wish to come near to God.' What is God doing here, O Luther, scatterer of flies, blowing smoke at us instead of flies? Is he doing this to keep the people from examining that secret will of God? Is he not reproaching people who claim justification for themselves through keeping the sabbath, fasting, sacrifices, and similar bodily observances, though they are hypocrites and actually violators of the Law? If I bring up Jerome interpreting it in such a way, he will say he is a corrupter of Holy Scripture. What will Luther say when he sees Oecolampadius interpreting it in the

* * * * *

[358] Rom 2:4–7, 11:22–3, 12:1

[359] At 548–58 below

[360] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 690:17–19 / LW 33 147

same way?[361] (But perhaps he will take the Spirit away from him once he ceased to agree with him on all points.) What is left except to let Scripture interpret itself? This passage comes just before: 'Cry out, do not cease, lift up your voice like a trumpet and proclaim their sins to my people and their iniquities to the house of Jacob.' This opening says nothing about inquiring into that secret will. They have the Law in their mouths, they examine what I command, what I wish, though they refuse to keep the principal points of the Law, love of God and neighbour. This is what God says in 'For they seek me day by day, etc.' And just as if they had kept the Law, they ask me for a reward as if it were earned by their deeds, and they all but remonstrate with God as if his memory was failing. For this is what follows: 'They ask me to judge that they are just, and they wish to come near to God' – according to the Septuagint, 'they ask for just judgment.' 'Why have we fasted and you have not looked upon us? Why have we humiliated our souls and you have ignored us?' These are the words of hypocritical Jews, boasting of their works. God replies to them: 'Behold, on the day of your fasting your will is discovered' and much besides, testifying that their works have the appearance of piety but are actually wicked.[362] With such evidence Luther victoriously defends his most paradoxical[363] dogma, a Hercules fighting against flies.

He confesses that where a reason can be given we should not bring in that majestic will (for that is what he now calls God not preached, frisking with new words).[364] Do you mean to tell me that no reason can be given why the wicked perish and the pious are saved? Quite the contrary, Holy Scripture very often gives the reason, charging them with unbelief and disobedience. In Isaiah the following commands are spoken: 'Stop acting perversely, learn to do good, seek to be judged, help the oppressed, give just judgment to the orphan, defend the widow, and then come and blame me, says the Lord.'[365] Does he not want to seem just even according to our judgment when he condemns the rebellious? Likewise in the Gospel, when he says, 'Come, you blessed, etc, who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, etc,' is he not giving the reason why he thinks them worthy of eternal life? Similarly, to those on the left he gives the reason why they are commanded to go into eternal fire.[366] Likewise, when the Lord laments the destruction of the Jewish people, does he remain silent about the reason when he says 'because you refused'?[367] In Isaiah 65[:11–12], when he mentions the differing rewards of the pious and the wicked, does he remain silent about the reason? 'You also,' he says, 'who have abandoned the Lord, who have forgotten my sacred mountain, who set up the table of Fortune and pour libations upon it, I will count you up for the sword and you will fall in the slaughter, because I called and you did not respond, I spoke and you did not listen, and you did evil in my sight and chose what I did not want you to do.' In this passage, Luther, you hear the word 'chose' used in a sense diametrically opposed to necessity; you hear that the grace of God which called them to a better life has been scorned. Such evidence is abundant throughout Holy Scripture. But if Luther seriously wants to tell us where this secret will is to be introduced, where it is to be adored, he can do so quite readily by saying it is introduced whenever he himself is at a loss in the argument.

---

[361] In *In Iesaiam prophetam ... commentariorum ... libri sex* (Basel: Andreas Cratander 1525) Oecolampadius remarks on Isa 58:2: '... Sunt enim hypocritae, qui difficilius arguuntur, tametsi simulent se doctrinae dei cupidissimos, & iustos arbitrentur ex proprijs operibus' ('For there are hypocrites who are more difficult to expose, though they pretend to be most eager for God's teachings and think themselves righteous because of their own works'). On Oecolampadius see *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 98 n14, 235 and n759.

[362] Isa 58:1–4

[363] The original has παραδοξότατον transliterated into the Latin alphabet.

[364] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 690:19–30 / LW 33 147

[365] Isa 1:16–18

[*Keeping the precepts, and the question of merit and reward in the Gospels*]
In the next section he adds nothing new: he simply sings the same refrain we have already refuted, except that he teaches us that there is nothing to keep sheer necessity from being compatible with the conjunction 'if' and with subjunctive verbs. Listen, reader, to this weighty lesson: 'Is it not true,' he says, 'that someone who says, "You must write quite different poems, Maevius, if you want to equal Virgil, etc"?'[368] Is there anyone who does not know that there is opportunity for irony in any form of speech? We say 'Now I have found out for myself how trustworthy you are' to someone whose perfidy is known to us; and yet these words are not subjunctive or imperative. What, then, follows from that? If it is permissible for this or

* * * * *

[366] Matt 25:34–43

[367] Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34

[368] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 691:1–15 / LW 33 148. Luther is arguing that 'if' often bespeaks impotence, not ability. Erasmus replies that the meaning of impotence arises from irony, not the 'if' construction. Maevius was a second-rate, would-be imitator of Virgil.

that person to speak for the sake of mockery or jesting or deception, does it follow that all subjunctive, imperative, and optative verbs are to be so interpreted according to a universal law? But in fact, not even this example matches what he is trying to prove. For it is not absolutely impossible for Maevius to write poems like the ones Virgil wrote; Luther teaches that whatever God commands is absolutely impossible for us to carry out. And what Luther adds about David does him no good: 'If you wish to be comparable to David, you must produce psalms like his.' Is it completely impossible for someone to write psalms such as David wrote? 'It can be done, but not by human powers.'[369] I never affirmed that it could. But when David wrote them, was he inspired in such a way that he himself did nothing at all and God produced the psalms through him just as he could have done through a tree or an ass? Or rather did his mind and will do something together with the Spirit who inspired him? If Luther denies that he did anything, we will say in reply that he both did something through his natural powers and by this action earned the favour of God. If he agrees with us, he disagrees with Karlstadt[370] and even with himself, unless perhaps the clay does something in the hand of the potter.

Is there any shape this Proteus[371] will not assume in order to escape? See the crack he has thought up to get away.[372] 'Although these words[373] show that free will can do nothing at all, yet at the same time they show that what is commanded will happen.' How so? 'God will give a person the will to observe the commandments; thus it will happen that the commandments will in turn save mankind.' But what does he mean when he says 'will give the will'? Will God give his own will, and will God's will act in a person whose own will does nothing? 'Absurd! But grace will move a person's will to observe the commandments, and it will always be present so that it[374] may carry through.'[375] Therefore the human will will simply be

* * * * *

[369] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 691:16–19 / LW 33 148

[370] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 6 n4, 33 and n123; *Hyperaspistes* 1 113 and n97, 164 and n370.

[371] *Adagia* II ii 74; cf *Hyperaspistes* 1 CWE 76 109–10 and n83.

[372] *Adagia* III ii 75

[373] Matt 19:17, cited along with a number of similar exhortations in *A Discussion* CWE 76 39

[374] The Latin verb here has no expressed subject, so that it is as ambiguous as 'it' in the English (grace or will?); but that grace is meant is suggested by Phil 2:13: 'For it is God who works in you both the will and the carrying through.'

[375] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 691:20–9 / LW 33 148–9

going through the motions.[376] But once he has introduced the absolute necessity of all things, Luther denies that there is any human will either in good deeds or bad ones; for the will that is not free does not even exist. But he grants that such an expression as 'If you wish, if you observe them, you will be saved' would be pointless and absurd if what is said could not be done in any fashion at all. As it is, they show us that God's predestination is unknown to us. How so? 'The intended meaning seems to be this: if you are such in the sight of God that he deigns to give you the will to keep the commandments, you will be saved. This way of putting it lets us know both points, namely that we do nothing and that if we do something God works it in us. Thus it would be true that we cannot observe any of the commandments and at the same time that we observe all of them. The first point is to be attributed to our own powers; the second, to the grace of God.'[377] This is what Luther says. If he means that without grace we can do nothing that is effective for salvation, I have no objection and allow this to be said of human powers; but how can we do all things when God works in us if our will does nothing? We say that a general aided by royal troops can do something. But no one says that an axe can build a house or that the room in which a poet is writing can write poems. This is directed against the opinion of Karlstadt.[378] Furthermore, this way of reasoning does not avoid the pointlessness of expressions like 'if you wish,' 'if you do it.' Couldn't he have said that God predestines some, does not predestine others, without twisting all the words of the Law to make the point? And then wouldn't it be pointless for someone to say to an axe, 'Cut this beam in this way, that beam in that way' and to give similar commands to pickaxes, augers, and a pair of compasses, meaning no more than that he has decided to use these instruments to do what he commanded? But Luther makes this point so pointlessly that he himself is not entirely pleased by his gloss. 'This is what I would say to those who refuse to be content, etc.'[379]

Having brought up some passages from the New Testament that mention rewards, *Discussion* draws the following conclusion: 'Where good and bad deeds are mentioned so often, where reward is mentioned, I do not understand how there can be any room for necessity. Neither nature nor

* * * * *

[376] *Adagia* I iv 70

[377] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 691:29–39 / LW 33 149; Erasmus shortens this passage from Luther.

[378] See n370 above.

[379] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 691:34–9 / LW 33 149

necessity merits anything.'[380] Here Luther throws up to me the probable opinion, namely that of Augustine, even though I set forth several opinions. Then too, while I make no definitive pronouncement but only fight against my enemy, it is sufficient if I have excluded sheer necessity. And if at this point I were only defending the probable opinion, what Luther keeps repeating would be false: 'For *Discussion* understands this passage,' he says, 'in such a way as to eliminate Christ and the Spirit of God.'[381] Quite the contrary, without the Spirit the will does nothing that pertains to salvation, but it acts with the Spirit and by acting together with him it merits. Clearly it is more worthy of the Holy Spirit to say that he moderates his force and action in such a way that the human will works at the same time as grace acts than it is to say that the Spirit acts in us in the same way as he does in an ox or an ass. But in order to mock this one conclusion of *Discussion*, Luther himself strings together a number of quite absurd conclusions: 'Free will exists, therefore the Spirit does not exist'; 'free will can act, therefore it can do all things without grace'; 'the human will acts, therefore all its actions take place without the assistance of the Spirit'; 'sheer necessity does not exist, therefore complete freedom exists.'[382] This opponent of ours is so hyperbolical that for him there is no middle ground. And he is amazed that when our will acts together with grace, which is the principal actor, we say that a person gains some merit.

But finally Luther stops talking nonsense; he plays the role of a doctor of theology. At his own whim he defines the Law, the gospel, merit, rewards, promises, exhortation, but he does it so conveniently that everything lines up beautifully for his victory. How could he fail to conquer if we were to grant him this right? This is to act as lawgiver,[383] however, not as a disputant. But let us listen to his definition: 'The gospel consists of promises and exhortations; the Law, of commandments and threats.'[384] For the sake of argument we will accept this definition as long as he grants that both are present in both Testaments and that the one is connected to the other. We grant that grace freely given and not merited is offered

* * * * *

380 *A Discussion* CWE 76 40; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 692:1–3 / LW 33 149

381 *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 692:11–12 / LW 33 150. Luther adds: 'For what need of them will there be if we possess good works and merits by means of free will?'

382 Not direct quotations but an ironic summary of Luther's position

383 The original has *νομοθέτην* transliterated into the Latin alphabet.

384 *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 692:19–20 / LW 33 150

through the gospel if he means preceding merits, according to the opinion of Augustine;[385] but if he means that no works are required of us to achieve salvation, we utterly deny it. As for his definition of exhortations as having no other aim than that, by means of them, God 'should stir up those who are already justified and have received mercy, to make them vigorous in the fruits of the Spirit and of the justification they have received and to make them exercise their charity in good works and so on,'[386] I do not have a clear enough understanding of this. First of all, we see in Holy Scripture many exhortations and also entreaties addressed to the disobedient. And then, how are they commanded to be vigorous if they do nothing but are merely passive to the action of grace? Finally, how can good works be mentioned here, since according to Luther the human will does not work at all, either for good or for evil? Or in what sense or by what figure of speech are they said to exercise themselves if they are merely passive to the action of the Spirit? But here poor *Discussion* is rebuked once more as ignorant of the distinction between the Law and the gospel, between the Old and the New Testament. What indication is there of this? Because 'she sees almost nothing except commandments to form good morals. But she sees absolutely nothing of what rebirth means and renewal and regeneration and the whole operation of the Spirit,' so that Luther is absolutely astounded that a person who has been conversant with Holy Scripture for so long should have no feeling whatever for it.[387] He puts up these verbal smokescreens before the eyes of the guileless: 'mortification,' 'rebirth,' 'the operation of the Spirit.' To this what shall I reply except that Luther is chock-full of boastful lies, since in many places in my writings I teach the things that he declares I know nothing about – except that Luther mortifies and regenerates quite differently than orthodox teachers ordinarily do? And the charge that '*Discussion* sees nothing except commandments' is obviously groundless, since she very often mentions promises, invitations, and blandishments. 'But from these I conclude that certain duties are required of the human will.'[388] Why should I not do so, since that conclusion can be drawn from them more effectively than from bare commandments? For a prince would be acting less absurdly if he mocked his people only by

* * * * *

---

[385] See, for example, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 5.10–11 PL 44 887–8.

[386] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 693:1–4 / LW 33 150

[387] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 693:5–11 / LW 33 150–1

[388] Erasmus is not quoting but rather summarizing Luther's argument. His use of 'I' to refer to himself is illogical but not seriously misleading. He does the same at the beginning of the next paragraph.

making threatening laws that could not be kept than if he added exhortations, entreaties, blandishments, and promises. And so in the end where is this confusion between the Law and the gospel? Nowhere but in Luther's dreams.

'But from the word "reward" I conclude that a person merits something.'[389] Oh, what a monstrosity! But Luther himself teaches us that Scripture is clear and is to be taken without figures of speech, according to common sense, as he interpreted the text 'The commandment is not above you or below or far away.'[390] But if someone hears a person saying 'You will be given a very abundant reward,' would he not immediately understand that the person to whom the promise was made would be required to perform some duty? Everyone would grant this. But Luther strenuously denies it: 'This passage,' he says, "your reward will be great in heaven," is the language of promise and consolation, not of commandment.' So what? Did I deny that it is consolation? Certainly not, but from the word 'reward' I deduce some work on the part of our will, whereas Luther claims it is completely idle. 'Be glad and rejoice'[391] are words of consolation, but joined to them is the commandment to take up the cross, which is given in another place.[392] But if reward does not exist without working for it, just as there is no father without a son, no tenant without a landlord, no buyer without a seller, if consolation and exhortation strengthen those who are working at keeping a commandment, what does Luther mean when he says that these words are no more consistent with free will than light is with darkness, except that he never stops speaking in hyperboles? I am at an even greater loss to understand what the last clause of this section means: 'We are chiefly disputing about free will without grace.' But for my part I am opposing the dogma of Luther which says that free will has no existence in the real world but is merely an empty name. For the probable opinion always joins free will with grace.

We have learned what reward is: it means exhortation, which is no more consistent with merit than light with darkness. Now he defines merit. Common sense would define merit as 'a duty performed to which a favour is owed in return.' But what is it according to Luther? Merit is a 'reward set

* * * * *

---

[389] Erasmus here discusses Luther's objections (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 693:11–19) to his arguments based on Matt 5:12, 20:1–16, 25:14–42 (*A Discussion* CWE 76 40).

[390] See 416–18 above.

[391] Matt 5:10

[392] Matt 16:24 (Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23), cited in *A Discussion* CWE 76 39

forth, nor is it anything more than a kind of promise.'[393] Bravo! He defines with such great freedom whatever he wills and just as he wills – and this is the person who denies free will! By these rules a 'deposit' is 'a promise to give back something that was never handed over for safekeeping,' and a 'loan' is 'a promise to pay back money that was never handed over'; and the persons are also suddenly reversed, so that what belongs to one is given over to the other, just as here he makes mankind's merit into the promise of God. Whoever promises a reward to a person who does something or other does not declare what that person can or cannot do but merely shows what he will get if he does it. It is 'a ridiculous conclusion,' according to him, that 'the prize is set forth for everyone in the race; therefore everyone can run and obtain it.'[394] Quite the contrary, it would be ridiculous for the superintendent of the games to urge a lame man to run in the race, telling him he will get the prize if he is the first to reach the goal. Here it is one and the same person who requires, encourages, and consoles; the same one commands us to take up the cross and says to Peter, 'Follow me';[395] the same one exhorts, the same one consoles us by promising a reward. But since these are all connected and depend on one another, we can rightly conclude from all of them that there is something incumbent on us to do. It is not necessary for us to carry out the whole operation by our own powers, since the same one who commands, exhorts, and promises adds power to those who are struggling. So there is no room here for the sophistical trickery that a conditional clause affirms nothing.

But having bid farewell to such crude considerations, he explains the knotty difficulty about how the word 'reward' can be consistent with absolute necessity and with nature. 'Reward is not consistent with necessity of compulsion, for who rewards someone who is unwilling? But it agrees quite nicely with necessity of immutability.'[396] I will not here examine how much difference there is between someone who does something unwillingly and someone who is forced to will something that he would not will on his own. For grace seeks out and finds those who are unwilling and

* * * * *

[393] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 693:19–20 / LW 33 151

[394] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 692:23–5 / LW 33 151

[395] John 21:22

[396] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 693:30–1 / LW 33 151. The Weimar edition of *De servo arbitrio* here omits a sentence translated by Watson as 'This is true as we are speaking of a necessity of compulsion' (LW 33 151; cf WA 18 693:30–1).

contrary. Luther assumes two points which the orthodox deny. First he asserts that a person provided with grace cannot turn away from grace by his own power, although very many passages in Scripture declare the opposite: 'Dwell in my love,' and Whoever stands 'let him see to it that he does not fall,' 'Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.'[397] To the one who is standing he says, 'See to it that you do not fall.' He should rather have said, 'Have confidence; you cannot fall unless grace is withdrawn, and it is not in your power to retain it or lose it.' The second point is that we believe from Holy Scripture and the ancient tradition of the church that the human will acts by its own power together with the action of grace. If it does nothing, why is a person said to work willingly, since he performs no work but is merely subject to the Spirit that works in him? For to will the good is also a sort of action. But if the Spirit both wills in us and works in us without us, why are we said to perform a good work? 'It follows naturally,' he says; 'If you sink in the water, you will drown; if you swim, you will be saved.'[398] The example does not fit the case, since the condition expresses only the outcome. No one says, 'Jump into the water; if you do, you will perish.' But the Lord says, 'Believe and be baptized; if you do, you will be saved' and 'Take up your cross; if you do, look for a great reward in heaven.'[399] A person's merit springs from the fact that he makes himself available to impelling grace and also accommodates the little power he has to operating grace, not turning away from it, though to do this is generally within his power – although I do not deny that God can take this power away for special reasons.

Behold, another distinction! 'If you consider worthiness, there is no merit; if you consider the consequence, there is enormous merit and reward.' To whom is it due? 'To divine grace, for that alone gave the good will and carried out the good deed.' Here once more Luther is inconsistent, since he attributes to a person the act of willing the good while at the same time he professes that the person does nothing whatever. But he testifies that he is speaking of free will apart from grace and is inquiring about the power proper to each.[400] The answer will be brief: according to the dogma of Luther, the will can do nothing at all, neither for good nor

* * * * *

[397] John 15:9; 1 Cor 10:12; Mark 14:38

[398] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 693:35–6 / LW 33 152

[399] Mark 16:16; Matt 16:24 (Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23; cf n392 above); Matt 5:12 (Luke 6:23)

[400] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 693:38–694:6 / LW 33 152.

for evil, since it is no more than an empty name. According to an opinion held by some and not yet rejected by the church, it can make such progress through morally good works that God will not deny the help of grace. According to the opinion of those who attribute more to grace, it can turn away from impelling grace and it can join its power, however insignificant, with operating grace.[401] Hence *Discussion* is not inconsistent, as he so often falsely charges, but rather Luther is inconsistent, since he has forgotten his teaching, which I reported from *A Discussion*[402] so that no one could deny it and he himself could not forget it. He should have aimed all his shafts at that target.[403] In arguing my case I am free to seize upon any of the opinions which I have not rejected. But this course is not open for Luther, unless he wishes to recant[404] the opinion he asserted. How completely self-contradictory his language is here! 'If you consider the consequence,' he says, 'there is nothing either good or bad that does not have its reward.' Who gets this reward? 'A human being.' For a good deed? 'For a good deed; but the good deed is not that of the person but of God alone.' Hence the reward can be said to be God's, not at all the person's. The same should be said about a bad deed according to Luther's dogma: 'If you sin you will go to hell, but a human being does not do a bad deed but rather God in him; nevertheless the person's reward is hell.'[405] Do we not deserve to be called stupid if we do not applaud these paradoxes?

But why does Luther shudder so violently at the word 'worthiness,' which occurs so often in Holy Scripture? Concerning those who were invited but made excuses, it is said 'They were not worthy.'[406] Why were they not worthy? Because they withdrew from impelling grace. But if the word 'worthiness' seems opposed to the glory of grace, he ought to have distinguished here between the worthiness of congruence and that of strict justice,[407] since he is swarming with so many distinctions. As for me – and I would like to have it said with no offence to others and no detriment to myself – it seems to me that even before grace there is a certain worthiness

* * * * *

[401] Here Erasmus gives the two opinions he defends; the second is probably his own position, and the first is not necessarily to be rejected. See *A Discussion* CWE 76 27–33 for Erasmus' distinction of positions on grace.

[402] See nn454–5 below.

[403] Cf *Adagia* I x 30.

[404] *Adagia* I ix 59

[405] Erasmus partly quotes and partly paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 694:5–11 / LW 33 152.

[406] Matt 22:8

[407] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 28–9 nn103, 106.

and unworthiness to receive grace.[408] When the apostles entered a village or town, they were commanded to seek out those who were worthy there and to lodge with them.[409] But some will refer this worthiness to divine predestination.[410] The apostles could not learn about this from human beings; if they recognized it from revelation, there would have been no need to seek them out. What, then, were they seeking? Persons there who were of good reputation because they lived innocently, harmed no one, relieved the poor. These persons they understood to be worthy of being offered the general grace of the gospel; such material they judged to be capable of grace; this they thought to be the good earth in which the sown seed would produce an abundant crop.[411] Nor is it true in an unqualified way that the wicked do not wish to be damned: since they know they must be damned if they persevere in sin and they do persevere willingly, they wish to be damned by an 'interpretative will,'[412] so to speak. 'But they are the slaves of sin and cannot not sin.' I grant it, apart from grace; but according to some they can solicit grace and accept the grace they solicited; according to others they can make themselves available to impelling grace, which will not be lacking to anyone. As for what he says about the life awaiting the pious whether or not they seek it,[413] even if it were true, it should either have been suppressed because of minds prone to wickedness or it should have been put differently. As it is, since it is false, it is all the more detestable. For it contradicts what is said in the Gospel: 'seek,' 'search,' 'knock,' 'stay alert.'[414]

But as for the question whether it is true that those who worship God in order to be rewarded with the kingdom of heaven will be damned, I will not examine it because it has nothing to do with the present question. I will point out that these words of Luther, 'but the sons of God do good out of a will that is disinterested,'[415] hardly agree with the paradoxes of those who

* * * * *

[408] Erasmus expresses his sympathy with the scholastic doctrine of *meritum de congruo* 'fitting merit,' which he here labels *dignitatem congruentiae* 'fitting worthiness'; but he does not assert it as true and necessarily to be accepted.

[409] Matt 10:11

[410] See 381 and n157 above.

[411] Luke 8:8

[412] That is, the will which can be perceived by the interpretation of their actions

[413] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 694:11–14 / LW 33 152, referring to Matt 25:34

[414] Matt 7:7; *vigilate* 'stay alert' occurs in Matt 24:42 and in many other places in the New Testament.

[415] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 694:17–20 / LW 33 153. Luther, Erasmus suggests, contradicts himself.

teach that the human will does nothing and that no human deed is good. To whom does a deed belong if not to the one who does it? If God alone does it, it does not belong to a man; if a man does good deeds, why are they not said to be his, as in fact they are said to be and are so in some fashion. But what does Luther conclude from that text 'Come, you blessed of my Father'? '"Come" is the language of consolation.'[416] I grant it, but what is added to it, 'because you did thus and so,'[417] is the language of merit. The kingdom was prepared for them from eternity, but it was foreordained that they would do such things. But in fact I have already taught – indeed the church has taught – that God's foreknowledge and his eternal decree do not impose necessity on the human will; I will say something on this point later in the appropriate place.[418] He asks: 'How does someone merit what was prepared for him before he was born?'[419] I reply: Because someone who is not yet born did deeds worthy of the kingdom of heaven in the eyes of him to whom all things are present at the same time. 'Could the person have changed his will?' He could have, at least for the worse. 'If this had happened, God's foreknowledge would have been false, his will hindered.' He knew that the person would not change it, or if he had changed it, that too would have been foreknown and destined by God.

Finally, just as he earlier interchanged the roles of the one who merits and the one who promises, so too here he transposes words of Scripture to make them match more closely the paradox of his dogma. He says: 'so that we could more rightly say instead that the kingdom of God merits us as its possessors, and we place the merit where they place the reward. For the kingdom is not being prepared but is preparing; in fact the sons of the kingdom are being prepared, not preparing the kingdom. That is, the kingdom merits the sons, not the sons the kingdom. So too hell merits and prepares its sons rather than they it, since Christ says, "Depart, you wicked, into eternal fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels."' This is what Luther says.[420] Who ever heard such monstrous language? He corrects the speech of Holy Scripture and shrouds the meaning in ambiguous language. If 'prepare' means 'decree,' as when a legislator wants punishment prepared for traitors and a reward for whoever defends his country, is it absurd to say in that case that a brave soldier has

* * * * *

[416] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 694:20–7 / LW 33 153, 694:16–17 / LW 33 154
[417] Matt 25:36–40, cited in *A Discussion* CWE 76 40
[418] 494-500 below; cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 51–2.
[419] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 694:22–3 / LW 33 153
[420] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 694:23–9 / LW 33 153

prepared a reward for himself simply because it had been legally prepared for all who fight bravely? In fact, on the one hand, it has been prepared because it was decreed and determined; on the other, it is prepared because it is gained by bravery. From eternity God has prepared rewards for the righteous, and mankind prepares the same for itself by keeping God's commandments with the help of his grace. Then again, God prepares mankind by his grace to keep the commandments, and mankind prepares itself by exercises conducive to piety. Now 'hell also merits the wicked,' whereas before he had said God performs even evil deeds in us, so that there is a danger that either God merits hell or hell, God. This is the way Scripture is treated by a man who charges that I mock Scripture!

By the same token he will say that the kingdom of God is not sought but rather seeks. And he will interpret for us the Gospel text 'First seek the kingdom of God'[421] to mean 'Do not seek what it would be useless for you to seek, but rather the kingdom of God will seek you, will find you whether you wish it or not; for it is a matter of sheer necessity, not of our effort.' Likewise he will interpret the Pauline text 'to those seeking eternal life by perseverance in well-doing'[422] in this way: not to those who of themselves persist in well-doing, since they do nothing, but those whom eternal life seeks, even if they never gave so much as a thought to seeking it. For Luther teaches not only that those who seek eternal life by good works do nothing but also that they are unworthy of it if they do seek it. These are Luther words: 'But they seek eternal life; that is, they are on the road by which they reach and find eternal life, so that "seek" means "to strive earnestly and to endeavour with diligent effort towards what regularly contributes to a good life."'[423] I pass over the man's hard-hearted interpretation, which has always been repudiated not only by the church but also by the common sense of mankind. But meanwhile I here call upon Luther, if he remembers his own teaching, to tell me how someone can be said to endeavour earnestly and with diligent effort if he does absolutely nothing but is merely subject to the action of grace. Are an axe and the clay said to strive or endeavour? And if someone strives diligently towards something, is it absurd to say he is seeking it? He adds that words of consolation or exhortation are employed so that they will not grow weary in

* * * * *

[421] Matt 6:33

[422] Rom 2:7; cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 42.

[423] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 694:37–9 / LW 33 153. At *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 694:15–17 / LW 33 152–3 Luther comes closer to saying exactly what Erasmus attributes to him here.

their labours.[424] How will they grow weary if they are not doing anything? Is there a danger that the Spirit acting in them will get tired?

So as to make some progress, I will pass over the rest of his babbling. The question on which we disagree is not why God chose to teach the wicked by commandments, to terrify them by threats, or to console the pious by promises and exhortations, since he could have done all these things without words, but rather why God chose to issue commandments which he knows we cannot keep even with the added help of grace, why he applies to the impossible so many threats, promises, blandishments, exhortations. 'He could have nourished us,' he says, 'without bread, but he did not wish to do so.'[425] I agree, but God gave man the power to eat the bread. But if he had held out a stone and said, 'Eat and be satiated,' merely to show mankind that it could not eat, that would be a fitting example. Here again, when he gets stuck on a question, the divine will which is only to be adored comes to the rescue.

[*Does Erasmus subvert his own position?*]

In the next section he cockadoodledoos that *Discussion* contradicts herself because she proves that free will can do all things without the help of the Spirit, but I have already made it clear time and time again that this charge is patently groundless. Certainly in this passage my words are as follows: 'These things seems pointless or superfluous if all things are reduced to necessity.'[426] My hyperbolical opponent distorts them – for he has no shame: 'What you say is ineffectual, superfluous, pointless, ridiculous, empty unless our will is free.'[427] The argument concerning the fruits, which are interpreted as human works,[428] Luther cuts in two with a new axe. 'We quite rightly call ours,' he says, 'things we did not make but received from others. Why, then, would we not call ours the works which God gave us through the Spirit? We call Christ ours, though we did not make him; we call our eyes ours, we call our feet ours, even though we ourselves did not make them.'[429] That is what he says. I do not deny that good works belong to God more than to us, and it is pious to ascribe them

* * * * *

[424] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 695:8–11 / LW 33 154

[425] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 695:22–36 / LW 33 154–5

[426] *A Discussion* CWE 76 41; 'these things' are the New Testament parables that according to Erasmus encourage human effort.

[427] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 696:14–15 / LW 33 156

[428] *A Discussion* CWE 76 41

[429] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 696:22–8 / LW 33 156

to grace, because without it they would not be ours. But Luther plays the fool when he wants our works to be called ours in the same way as our feet are ours, since they were given to us by God with no help from us, or as money is ours which someone gave us as a gift though we did nothing to earn it. The house my friend gave me is mine. But no one would say that the house is my work or that a picture given to me as a gift is my work. Nor would anyone call a garment given as a gift a recompense, reward, or prize, words which are used by Holy Scripture. Why, then, are the same deeds called God's gifts and our works? Because here the grace of the Spirit plays the principal role; our will contributes some effort. It is tiny, but God takes it in good part, however small; and beyond it you can contribute nothing, but still it is so important that unless it is there the grace of God would be in vain for you. Thus Paul, who was not lacking in response to grace, says, 'And God's grace in me was not in vain.'[430]

From the words of Christ on the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing,' this violent debater concludes, or rather wrings out, something quite different from what I am trying to prove.[431] 'If they do not know,' he says, 'then free will is so powerless that it not only cannot perform what is pious but cannot even know it.'[432] But Luther has taught us that through the Law comes knowledge of sin. Certainly many of those who crucified Christ knew the Law. If Pilate knew that Christ was innocent, how could that be unknown to the Pharisees and Scribes, to Annas and Caiaphas? Therefore they knew and did not know: they knew that he was righteous; they did not know that he was God and man. That secret counsel of God by which he had determined to redeem the human race they did not know, as is testified by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2[:8]: 'For if they had known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory.' And this is the language of charity, which also seeks reasons to forgive, as in what Peter says in Acts 3[:17]: 'And now I know, brothers, that you did it out of ignorance, as did your leaders.' Luther, who takes 'reward' to mean 'an unexpected outcome' and 'merit' to mean 'promise,' will not permit us to take their ignorance to be non-malicious and compounded with weakness so that the supreme charity wishes to forgive it. But let us grant that these passages fully prove that free will is a dream, that all things are carried out by necessity, how is that consistent with what follows: 'Therefore repent

* * * * *

430 1 Cor 15:10

431 Luke 23:34; *A Discussion* CWE 76 41

432 Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 697:1–20 / LW 33 156–7.

and turn away so that your sins may be wiped out'?[433] This is how Luther will interpret it: 'repent,' that is, 'God will do penance'; 'and turn away,' that is, 'God will turn to you'; 'so that your sins will be forgiven,' that is, 'whether you wish it or not, it will follow that your sins will be wiped out, sins which you did not commit but which God committed in you.'

But I come back to the words 'forgive them.' Who begs forgiveness for those who have done absolutely nothing, either for good or for evil? No one begs forgiveness for an axe if it cut a shin-bone rather than a beam; no one asks forgiveness for a baby if its fluids contaminate a woman giving birth. Whoever says 'forgive' confesses that there is a sin. Whoever mitigates a sin on the pretext of ignorance either excuses what ought not to be excused as an example of boundless mercy or else perceives that the ignorance is indeed culpable but is to be forgiven none the less because of the admixture of error, if the persons come to their senses. Thus Peter first mentions and magnifies the enormity of the crime: 'So you denied a holy and a just man and chose to have a murderer handed over to you, but you killed the source of life.' This is the wine poured into the wound that is to be healed. Immediately he pours in the oil: 'I know that you did it through ignorance. Repent and turn away.'[434] I am surprised that a man who abounds in so many extemporary distinctions did not distinguish here between the language of charity and that of severity. One says, 'They did not know what they were doing'; the other, 'They did not want to understand so as to act well' and 'You who preach against adultery commit adultery' and 'A servant who knows the will of his master and does not do it deserves many lashes.'[435] And this impetuous orator asserts that no passage could be cited which more completely demolishes free will than this one, which I brought up in its favour. 'They do not know' he takes to mean 'they are not able to know, much less to do,' pressing upon us at the same time his hyperbolical propositions: 'Free will can either do everything on its own or it can do nothing at all'; 'If the human will is free in any way, the Spirit is nothing; if the Spirit is something, then the human will is nothing'; and 'The conclusion conflicts with the probable opinion.'[436] And after such worn-out refrains he triumphs: 'But to hear and to handle the word of God in this way reveals a mind that has an extraordinary scorn for God and man and deserves no

* * * * *

[433] Acts 3:19

[434] Acts 3:14, 17, 19

[435] Ps 35:4; Rom 2:22; Luke 12:47

[436] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 697:5–15 / LW 33 157.

patience whatever.'[437] At the same time it does not concern him that these insults land not only on me but on all the Doctors of the church, all of whom are extraordinarily contemptuous of God and man, while Luther is an extraordinary worshipper of God and teacher of men. Luther says that a person does nothing either for good or evil but acts like an axe in the hand of a workman. But whoever asks to be forgiven confesses he has sinned, and someone who sins does something; he deserves a punishment, which the intercessor begs may not be inflicted. And yet Luther asserts that this passage no more makes against his dogma than if I had cited 'On the seventh day God rested from his work.'[438] Indeed one could more probably establish free will from that text than Luther can conclude from words of command that mankind can do nothing!

In the next section there is marvellous cockadoodledooing, which it is wearisome to report. I will say just a little bit about the matter. He is amazed at the obtuseness of *Discussion* for citing the text from John, 'He gave them power to become sons of God, etc,'[439] although there is no lightning bolt more effective in striking down free will. Tell me the proof of that! 'What need to do so? Don't you hear "to become"? There is no mention of work. A person becomes a son of God; he does not make himself one.'[440] Thus, when someone says to a schoolboy who has been provided with books, a teacher, and travelling money, 'See now, you have the power to become a learned man,' do we understand that he is suddenly transformed into a learned man with no effort on his part? Oh what a wonderful word 'become'! Oh how blind we are not to have seen something so manifestly clear! But the text continues: 'to those who believe in his name.' I ask you, is believing some sort of work? If it is, then clearly work is mentioned. And then, since faith is the source of good works, whoever names the source indicates the rest well enough. 'But faith,' he will say, 'is a free gift of God. Where, then, is there any room for free will?'[441] To this extent there is room for it: that by means of free will a person can exclude the impelling grace of faith, he can embrace it if there is no other obstacle, and he can lose it once he has accepted it. Having denied this, Luther

* * * * *

437 *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 697:18–20 / LW 33 157
438 Gen 2:2; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 697:15–17 / LW 33 157
439 John 1:12; *A Discussion* CWE 76 41; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 698:15–16 / LW 33 158
440 Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 697:25–30 / LW 33 157.
441 Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 697:36–698:9 / LW 33 158.

will take refuge in that secret will of God. Listen, reader, to the conclusion drawn by *Discussion;* her inference in this passage is as follows: 'How are we given the power to become sons of God if our will has no freedom?' This is how Luther distorts it: '*Discussion* insists that free will can do all things; she is ready to pronounce John's words pointless and ridiculous.' And later: '*Discussion* is so obtuse that she makes no distinction at all between words of promise and words of the Law.'[442] This is how he proves it: because I draw arguments to establish free will from both the commandments and the promises. This is what he says. Is it making no distinction to draw arguments from both? Where do I call a commandment a promise or vice versa? And if the promises are consistent with the commandments, why is it absurd to draw the same conclusion from the promises as from the commandments? Here he does not remember that I am debating, not defining. And he does not consider that the insults he babbles against *Discussion* fall upon the most approved Doctors of the church, who reasoned from these passages in the same way. How lavishly this glutton stuffs and gorges himself with insults!

After this he suddenly becomes God and makes judgments about my mind.[443] 'But we can easily put up with such absurdity,' he says, 'if we consider how disaffectedly and contemptuously *Discussion* debates; to her it does not matter whether grace stands or falls, lies prostrate or sits firmly, as long as she serves tyrants with empty words to bring our cause into disrepute.'[444] I have quoted these words so that the reader can clearly see with his own eyes what spirit drives Luther, how shameless he is in lying, how wicked in judging the consciences of others, how credulous of denunciations whatever their source, how contemptuous of the Doctors of the church and of the monarchs of the world. I confess that I wrote about free will at the instigation of the princes, but I never betrayed the cause of the faith to gain anyone's favour. In place of false insults I could retort with true ones, but I prefer to consider what is more agreeable to my reader and more worthy of myself than what is deserved by the unbridled aspersions of Luther. Certainly it is no secret to me what brother without Christ[445] set these things down for him, taking a handle[446] for his lies from our conversations; this is

* * * * *

---

[442] *A Discussion* CWE 76 41; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 697:30–2 / LW 33 157–8, 698:17–19 / LW 33 158

[443] See *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 126–7.

[444] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 698:21–3 / LW 33 159

[445] Erasmus parodies the usual phrase *frater in Christo* 'brother in Christ.'

[446] *Adagia* I iv 4

the reward for the intimacy I granted him. I am also not unaware of whose letters egged Luther on to undertake his triumphant disputation. This instigator thinks he is quite urbane and considers it an exploit fit for a king to incite Luther against Erasmus. The other one, who thinks he knows Erasmus from the intimacy they shared, is deceptive and treacherous and can be called a Thrasybulus (not only in this affair).[447]

But finally Luther wearies and goes on to the passages that seem to establish free will, but he leaves behind many passages from Paul's epistles that bear down on his dogma more vigorously than the ones that I recounted from other places in Scripture.[448] If he deliberately skipped over them, he has no confidence in his cause. If he did it because he was sick and tired of them and didn't have the leisure to respond to all of them individually, he could have avoided that difficulty by indulging more sparingly in his insults and his cockadoodledooing. But what good would it have done if he had responded to all of them if he did so as he has up to this point, tying one paradox to another like weak pieces of string:[449]

> the Law does not act together with the human will but only points out sin, which can by no means be avoided, and thus prepares a person for grace; indicative,[450] subjunctive, and optative verbs do not indicate any ability in a person but rather they demonstrate that he cannot do anything at all, either

---

[447] By the treacherous friend Erasmus may have meant Melanchthon (see *Hyperaspistes* 1 CWE 76 101 n32, 103 n44, 107 n64, 110 n88). Erasmus' description of the instigator as an *urbanus* 'urbane' person who thinks it is *regium* 'kingly' to stir up Luther against Erasmus plays on the name of Urbanus Rhegius. On him and Melanchthon see CEBR. Erasmus seems to refer to the generally successful Athenian general and statesman Thrasybulus (fl 400 BCE), a democratic leader who betrayed the oligarchy. The reference does not seem to fit very well, since he was generally admired (see *Adagia* II viii 93). Perhaps the word is a printer's error for Thrasonicus; see *Hyperaspistes* 1 CWE 76 99 nn18 and 21.

[448] In *A Discussion* CWE 76 41–5 Erasmus quotes eighteen texts from Paul, two from James, two from 2 Peter and one each from Matthew and Acts in support of free will. Luther cites and discusses only the first of these texts (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 698:24–699:6 / LW 33 159–60).

[449] *Adagia* I viii 59; see n230 above. In the following long passage Erasmus imagines and caricatures how Luther would have deployed his stock arguments against some of the texts he skipped over. The biblical texts in this passage which Erasmus quoted and Luther passed over are: Rom 2:2, 5–6; 1 Cor 9:24–5; 1 Tim 6:12; James 1:13–15; 1 John 3:3; 2 Tim 2:21; 2 Pet 1:5, 10.

[450] This is probably a slip for 'imperative.'

for good or for evil; that one thing is willed by the crucified God, something else by the God who dwells in inaccessible light;[451] that recompense, reward, prize, and similar words do not refer to effort or to the performance of a duty but rather they mean the consequence, that is, the outcome that necessarily follows, whether you will it or not; that merit does not signify a service that earns a reward but rather a gratuitous promise of God, so that, when we speak of the merits of the saints, we understand God's promises, by which he consoles those who deserve nothing and do not even want to deserve anything, lest they should grow weary, that is, lest the Spirit, which is both active and passive in them, should fail; that the Law is not applied to the pious and the meek but only to the wicked and stubborn; and, on the other hand, that promises and exhortation apply only to the pious, for whom the kingdom of heaven is prepared, whether they seek it or not; and 'seek' in Holy Scripture does not mean to strive for eternal life by prayers and pious deeds – far from it! – but rather to be on the road that brings us to the kingdom of heaven, whether we wish it or not; that between opposites there is no middle ground, as, for example, if the will is said to be free, it is necessary that it be able to do all things by its own power without grace; if it is not, it cannot do anything at all, either for good or for evil; if the human will can do anything at all, the Spirit is nothing; if the Spirit is something, the human will has no freedom at all; 'to work' means to be subject to the working of the Spirit; 'to act' means 'to be seized and acted upon'; 'he will render to each according to his works,' that is, according to deeds which are not his but which are freely given to him by God; 'the wicked deserve hell,' that is, hell deserves them; and 'the kingdom is prepared for the pious,' that is, the kingdom prepares the pious; 'he runs in the race,' that is, God in him runs in the race; 'he struggles in the contest,' that is, in him God carries out the struggle; and 'he takes hold of the prize,' though it is given gratis to someone who does nothing and does not even want it; 'God tempts no one,' that is, God as preached tempts no one, but God as not preached even forces people to sin, indeed he himself commits sins in them; likewise Luther interprets the phrase from John 'he makes himself holy' as meaning he will be subject to the Spirit who makes him holy and he is subject whether he wills it or not; and in Paul's 'he made himself clean' the phrase 'made clean' has merely a passive meaning; when Peter says 'casting all your concern' Luther will interpret it as spoken in the manner of the crucified God; again, when Peter says, 'Therefore, brothers, exert yourself all the more so that by good works you make your calling and election certain,' Luther will explain it as meaning that without you the Holy Spirit

* * * * *

---

[451] Cf 1 Tim 6:16.

LB X 1389D

> works in you so that by his good works you may receive eternal life, which you do not need to be concerned about but which is nevertheless prepared for those who do not seek it.

Leaf through all of Scripture; there is no page which does not have texts which require such an interpretation if we accept Luther's dogma of sheer necessity.

Now he turns to the confirmation of his dogma. Having felicitously routed the flies, he takes up his own cause, once more remarking at the outset that subjunctive, optative, and imperative verbs offer no support for free will, much less words of exhortation, even though we demonstrated that it can be inferred more certainly from texts of exhortation, promising, and beseeching that our will does something than from bare commandments. He also sings that lying refrain that *Discussion* during the course of the argument attributes so much to free will that it can do all things without grace. Somewhere he falsely charged that I had made an indefinite proposition into a universal.[452] He himself is always stumbling against this stone: 'The human will can do something; therefore it can do all things by itself.' But he sends in advance a siege-machine to demolish everything, even if you should bring up thousands of testimonies from Holy Scripture in favour of free will. 'In Romans 8[:14] Paul writes that the pious are driven by the Spirit of God, not by free will.' Where did Luther ever learn such logic: the ship is driven by the sails; therefore it is not driven also by the waves? How often have we said that the human will acts as it is acted upon? And so we also grant that the pious are driven by the Spirit of God, but we deny what Luther adds, that they are seized and acted upon as a saw and an axe are acted upon by a workman.[453] Indeed how wonderfully happy are the sons of God if they are to the Holy Spirit what an axe is to a workman! And in fact Paul did not say what Luther asserts, namely that even the wicked are driven by the Spirit of God. Even if the pious are said to be driven by the Spirit because the Spirit alone performs all good works in them, what keeps us from saying the same thing about the wicked, in whom the same Spirit, according to Luther, performs all evil works? For the human will, both in good deeds and evil ones, is merely passive and acted upon; it does not work or act.

But here he wants to seem candid by acknowledging his own words, which *Discussion* quoted from his *Assertion*.[454] But how is it praiseworthy

* * * * *

[452] See n83 above.
[453] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 699:7–13 / LW 33 160
[454] *A Discussion* CWE 76 45

not to deny something which has been made public in writing? And yet the outcome showed that there was good reason for me to quote them. For when some people who were anxious to defend Luther on all points read this passage in *A Discussion,* they confessed that they would never have believed that Luther meant this if I had not quoted his very words. And so I will record them here. This is how they read: 'Hence it is also necessary to revoke this article. For I misspoke when I said that free will before grace exists in name only; rather I should have simply said "free will is a fiction among real things, a name with no reality." For no one has it within his control to intend anything, good or evil, but rather, as was rightly taught by the article of Wyclif which was condemned at Constance, all things occur by absolute necessity.'[455] Luther should have twisted the citations of *Discussion* to support this dogma rather than the probable opinion, although nothing there is inconsistent with the probable opinion unless Luther steps up to interpret it. In conflict it is sufficient to down your opponent by whatever means; other matters can be settled at leisure. But this is the tail-end of Luther's argumentation, which he devotes entirely to some opinion or other dreamed up by him. 'These many verses,' says *Discussion,* 'not without cause, have influenced learned and holy men not to rule out free will altogether. It is far from true that they have been inspired by the spirit of Satan and have called down damnation on themselves by trusting in their own works.'[456] Even from this such a clear-sighted person as Luther could have understood the point I was making with these testimonies, namely that the human will is not completely inactive and that those who supported free will did not trust in their own works in such as way as to call down damnation on themselves by excluding grace – as Luther never ceases to pound home.

[ERASMUS' RESPONSE TO LUTHER'S DEFENCE OF SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES OPPOSING FREE WILL]

It is best, however, to skip over this fellow's more than Thrasonical[457] introduction. 'Up to this point,' he says, 'a smokescreen has been put up by a man' – as if I had brought forward nothing from Scripture – 'now we will hear the lightning and thunder of God,' that is, interpretations by Luther which are much superior to those we have heard from him up till now.

---

[455] *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 143:3–8 / CWE 76 306; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 699:13–23 / LW 33 160

[456] *A Discussion* CWE 76 45

[457] Thraso is a braggart in Terence's *Eunuchus.*

He assails me for citing so many scriptural passages in favour of free will, whereas I have passed over innumerable texts; meanwhile the witty fellow mocks all the saintly men and women who have attributed anything to free will. Why, O Lutherans, do you not applaud such clever sayings? If you applaud, you will hear even more clever jokes. 'If the Holy Spirit,' he says, 'were not somewhat knowledgeable about rhetoric, there would be a danger that he would be shattered by such artfully simulated contempt, would despair of his case, and yield the palm to free will even before the trumpet blew for battle.' Isn't this marvellously clever? Here now is some more of his braggadocio: 'But as for me, a mere reservist, later on I will also marshall our troops around those two passages, although where the fortune of battle is such that one soldier puts ten thousand to flight,[458] there is no need of troops. For if one passage defeats free will, his innumerable troops will do him no good.'[459] I will not reply to every point individually, lest this seem to be a contest in scurrility rather than in arguing a case. What troops does Luther bring up? And where from? Are they not from Holy Scripture? From where did I lead up my army? Wasn't it also from the same place? How then will one Lutheran soldier put ten thousand to flight? Will Scripture strike down Scripture? No, but one false interpretation by Luther, if it is convenient for him, will undermine all of Scripture, although I think I have demonstrated how much trickery he uses to do so. If *Discussion* had brought forth testimony from Aristotle, Luther's boasts might have amounted to something. As it is, what he says against Scripture is thoroughly stupid, not to say wicked, since the struggle is not between Scripture and Scripture but between the interpretation of all the Doctors of the church and that of Luther, together with some few others condemned by the church. He will say that they were all mad and driven by the spirit of Satan, while he, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, brings forward the true meaning of Scripture. If he can persuade us of this, he has won. But meanwhile his bragging falls flat, to say nothing of his inane witticism about the Holy Spirit not being a tyro in rhetoric. Luther finds the greatest pleasure in joking about saints and the Holy Spirit, whenever he wishes to unwrinkle his grave forehead.[460]

[*The use of figures of speech in Scripture*]

Let us hear, then, the lightning bolts of God which Luther brings forth. Of the two principal passages which seem to eliminate free will completely, one is God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart. It is found in Exodus 9[:12] and

* * * * *

[458] Cf 1 Kings 18:7 and Ecclus 47:7.

[459] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 699:22–700:11 / LW 33 160–1

[460] *Adagia* I viii 48

is handled by the Apostle in the Epistle to the Romans in chapter 9, which also cites Exodus [33:19]: 'I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy on; I will take pity on whomever I take pity on.' Because Origen resolves this difficult question by means of a figure of speech according to which a son is said to be ruined if he is not immediately reproached when he sins,[461] Luther here uses a commonplace against figures of speech. For rhetoricians have sayings which are such that they ordinarily apply them to either side of a case depending on what is convenient, such as 'witnesses are to be believed' and 'witnesses are not to be believed' or 'torture produces what is to be believed' and 'torture produces what is not to be believed.' But Luther goes beyond even the rhetoricians. For no rhetorician treats both sides of a commonplace in the same case, but rather in different cases. But in the same case Luther wants figures of speech to be quite valid as often as they seem to support his dogma; then again, he hisses them off the stage as often as they make for his opponent. He does this as if he had a right to do so. It is unfair of him to accuse *Discussion* of inventing figures of speech, since nothing is more common in Scripture than to avoid some absurdity in the language by means of figures of speech. And so it is beside the point to accuse *Discussion* even if she had brought forward her own figural interpretations; as it is, since she cites figures of speech propounded by approved Doctors of the church, Luther is acting much more unfairly. Therefore *Discussion* is not asking for something unfair if she asks for the right to use figures against someone who protects himself with figures.[462]

Now let us discuss the category of figures. The ones adduced by Luther deviate from ordinary usage and common sense; the ones brought up by *Discussion* come from approved authorities and agree with custom and common sense, to which Scripture likes to accommodate itself. And *Discussion* introduces figures where the words of Scripture deviate from common sense; Luther brings his in where Scripture is in complete agreement with nature and common sense so that he can introduce his meaning, which is abhorrent both to the opinion of the ancients and to the common agreement of mortals. Listen to some Lutherly figures, which I hardly know whether he will deign to acknowledge: 'stretch out your hand to what you want,' that is, grace will extend a hand to what it wants; 'make for yourselves a new heart,' that is, grace will make a new heart for you;[463] 'keep the commandments,' that is, you cannot keep the commandments, but be aware that you

* * * * *

[461] *A Discussion* CWE 76 46 n206, 47 n207

[462] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 700:12–18 / LW 33 161–2

[463] *A Discussion* CWE 76 58; *Hyperaspistes* 1 CWE 76 164 and n370

cannot do this; and the rest, which we mentioned above, about recompense, merit, reward, prize, struggle, running, all of which Luther interprets by means of very strained figures which are quite foreign to ordinary linguistic usage and removed from the authority of orthodox teachers, whenever the character of the dogma he is defending requires him to do so.[464] Poets take great liberties in using figures, but what poet ever said: 'he committed adultery, that is, someone else did it in him'; 'he manned an oar, that is, he was manned by an oar'; or 'he gave him a reward that he deserved, that is, he gave him a gift for no other reason than that he had decided and promised to do so, though the recipient did nothing and deserved nothing.' With such figures as these Luther defends his cause, and yet he calls me a Proteus,[465] though I employ figures which not only are far more restrained but also were put forth by orthodox teachers in their writings, and I do this only when the apparent absurdity of the language requires it. Such is the case when God, who is supremely good, is said to harden the heart of the king to make his own glory more illustrious through the wickedness of the king, or when we find in Jeremiah 'You have led me astray and I am led astray.'[466] Therefore the rationale behind our figures is different: on his own, Luther makes up very strained and violent figures; mine, which are handed down by the ancients, are both recognized as in accord with common linguistic usage and confirmed by a comparison with similar places in Scripture. Furthermore, he is quite right when he says that the authority of Scripture would be invalidated if its language could be manipulated by figures and fabricated inferences to mean whatever anyone wanted it to mean.[467]

But after he has disposed of figures of speech, he takes up another commonplace, this time against Origen,[468] whose mistake, if he did go astray, ought to be and is in fact pardoned for two reasons: first, because he wrote to investigate such things, not to define them; and then because he wrote at an early period when it was legitimate to have doubts about many points which cannot now legitimately be considered ambiguous. I confess that Origen sometimes played games with allegory, but what does that have to do with this figure of speech, which is not an allegory? The church has approved of this gloss of Origen; Jerome,[469] together with orthodox teachers,

* * * * *

[464] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 700:12–24 / LW 33 161–2
[465] See n371 above.
[466] Exod 9:12–16; Jer 20:7
[467] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 700:35–701:4 / LW 33 162–3
[468] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 701:4–8 / LW 33 163
[469] *A Discussion* CWE 76 47 and n208

follows it. Figures of speech are now indicted as the reason Arius made Christ into a merely putative God.[470] Why not indict the apostle Paul instead for the same crime, since he calls Satan the god of this world and confesses that there are many who are called gods and are so? The mystic psalmist also names the 'gods of the gentiles,' because they were considered to be gods. And Christ himself approves of the text 'I said, "You are gods and all of you sons of the most high."'[471] Finally, Luther attributes to figures of speech the fact that some disagree with him about the Eucharist. And not content with this, he proclaims that he has observed how 'all heresies and errors about Scripture do not arise from the simplicity of the language but from neglecting the simplicity of the language and racking our own brains for figures and inferences.'[472] If he had said 'many errors,' we could bear with him, but it was shameless of him to say 'all,' since the largest number of heresies[473] arose not from figures of speech or simple language but from Greek philosophy,[474] when those who were infected by it rather than imbued with it came to the interpretation of Scripture. Certainly it cannot be denied that the Anthropomorphites drew their error from the simplicity of language and an ignorance of figures: because they read about God's hands, feet, arms, heart, eyes, they believed that he has a body consisting of human members and therefore grows angry, feels rage, is moved with compassion, repents, rejoices, grieves, though God feels none of these emotions. Likewise Luther declaims against inferences. What, then, does Luther want? That all figures, together with inferences, should be excluded? I think not; he wants us to accept suitable figures, reject inappropriate ones, and examine doubtful ones.

We can do this if we follow the rule he lays down. He says that in Scripture no figure or inference is admissible 'unless we are forced to it by the evident context of the words and the manifest absurdity of a literal sense that conflicts with some article of faith,' but everywhere he wants us

* * * * *

[470] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 701:7–8 / LW 33 163; see *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 111 n92.

[471] 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Cor 8:5; Ps 95:5; Ps 81:6; John 10:34

[472] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 701:10–14 / LW 33 163

[473] In the original *αιρέσεων* has been transliterated into the Latin alphabet.

[474] Cf Lorenzo Valla *De libero arbitrio dialogus* ed Jacques Chomarat (Paris 1983) 26 no 4 trans Charles Trinkaus in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* ed Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall (Chicago 1948) 155: 'In fact, if we look carefully, the heresies of those times [that is, among the followers of the Apostles], which we understand were many and not insignificant, derived almost entirely from philosophic sources, so that philosophy not only profited our most sacred religion little but even violently injured it.'

to stick 'to the simple, pure, and natural sense of the words as determined by grammarians and the normal use of language, which God created in mankind.'[475] I accept this prescription, but only if he defines for us what an article of faith is, and furthermore distinguishes between an allegory that undermines the historical or grammatical sense and one that treats the moral sense without abandoning the foundation, as it were, of the grammatical meaning. When that is done, we will compare Luther's figures with mine, weighing which agree better with common sense and which are motivated by an absurdity of meaning. Did anyone with common sense ever take all the public laws of a community as if their commands proclaimed nothing but that the citizens can in no way perform what they command and that the threats of the laws also had no other purpose? Or what absurdity forced Luther to depart from simple language and take refuge in unheard-of figures of speech in the many thousands of places where Scripture commands or frightens or threatens or demands or rebukes or promises or coaxes or exhorts? 'The inference,' he says, 'teaches that a person can keep all the commands by his own power.'[476] This is Luther's inference. Quite the contrary, it follows that a person can do so with the help of grace, which is available, and that a person who violates the Law is rightly punished, since his will is to blame for his not being able to observe it. But Luther cannot protect his absurd dogma except by using even more absurd figures and inferences to defend it. What common sense would it be to interpret that a man need do nothing to become a father because he has been given the power to become a father by marrying a wife? Shall we accept figures such as these, inferences such as these? Shall we reject the others? If common sense, by which Luther expounds Scripture, was created by God in all men of sound mind, what shall we say about the many thousands of learned men who have interpreted Scripture differently than Luther does?

Now let us listen to the example he alleges for the rule he has just prescribed for us. But meanwhile let me refute the charge of slander which he levels at my *Discussion*. He says he does not remember where he applied such violent manipulation to Scripture – 'stretch out your hand,' that is, grace will stretch it out; and 'make for yourselves a new heart,' that is, grace will make a new heart for you – 'although *Discussion* makes a laughing-stock of me in a published pamphlet, for she is so stuffed with tropes and inferences and so befuddled that she does not realize what she

* * * * *

---

[475] *De servo arbitrio* WA 700:31–5 / LW 33 162

[476] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 701:23–6 / LW 33 164.

is saying or what she is saying it about.'[477] Does Luther here realize what he is saying or what he is saying it about? At the beginning of the disputation I named the authors of the opinions I reject, then I mentioned the opinions I neither accept nor reject, and finally those I oppose; what common sense, then, makes Luther rush to apply to himself whatever is said there? In the introduction I certainly mentioned Karlstadt, whose opinion this is.[478] In this passage I give no names, so that each can acknowledge his own. If this opinion belongs to someone else, why does he cry out when someone else's sore is touched? And the fellow has such a tender concern for his reputation that he complains he has been made a laughing-stock if he is said to have interpreted Scripture in this way, although his interpretations about the workman and the axe are much more strained. And at the same time he forgives himself for so often calling me an atheist, an Epicurus, a blasphemer, a mocker of Holy Scripture. For he thinks these sallies are witty, not abusive. What occasion was there, I ask you, for 'she does not realize what she is saying or what she is saying it about'? And he adds a witty jest: 'for she is so stuffed with tropes and inferences and so befuddled.' Who does not see that this was written when he was out of his mind, and that Luther was not acting when he wrote this but rather was acted upon by some spirit of evil-speaking? If he does not remember whether he said these things, why does he indict *Discussion* for falsehood? It is just as if someone indicted for theft should reply, 'I don't remember committing this theft; therefore you are accusing me falsely.' If a person says he does not remember, he is almost acknowledging what he is charged with. And so it is ridiculous for Luther to incriminate *Discussion*, since he confesses he is in doubt about whether or not he wrote such things. As it is, even if he knew for sure that he did not write anything like this, still it is outrageous of him to apply my indictment immediately to himself, since in *A Discussion* I am dealing with more opponents than Luther alone and I never charge Luther by name as he did me when he wrote this whole hodgepodge of insults to gratify his companions and the sophists.[479] But let us listen to his more restrained interpretation: 'these words "stretch out your hand," if we take the words simply as they stand and prescind from figures and inferences, mean no more than that we are required to extend our hands, and what is signified is what we ought to do, in keeping with the nature of imperative verbs according to the grammarians and normal linguistic

* * * * *

[477] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 701:14–19 / LW 33 163

[478] *A Discussion* CWE 76 5–6 and n4; see also 342 and n26, 448 above.

[479] Erasmus regularly uses this word to refer to scholastic theologians.

usage.'[480] Quite the contrary, if Luther excludes all figures, no action is commanded, but only the stretching out of the hand, since an action requires the whole body.[481] Now since what is needed for the love of God and neighbour is not the stretching out of a hand but the affection of the heart, if we prescind from all figures, this passage pertains only to commandments which are normally executed by the hand alone.

Now Luther accepts a figure in so far as it excludes an absurd meaning; but when he withdraws from the simple meaning of the language and interprets it with his figures, his meaning is no less absurd. According to the grammarians – for he names them to be judges – has 'recompense' ever signified 'an outcome not owing to any merit'? Have any schoolmasters ever taken 'merit' to mean 'the promise of a gift'? Does 'to seek life' mean 'to be on a road which leads to life, though you yourself are not seeking life, so that a person already leading a pious life is no more said to be seeking life than an axe carried by someone on the road which leads to Rome can be said to be seeking Rome'? These are Lutherly figures; these are the inferences which he foists off on us over the protests of the grammarians and against all common sense.[482] And by these figures, these inferences, he distorts not just three or four passages in Scripture but almost all of Holy Scripture. Human law says: 'Children should nourish their parents; if they do not, let them be held in chains.' If you concentrate on the grammatical sense, what does the law command? Only that food and drink be given. There is no mention of housing, clothing, and other necessities of life. But common sense understands that children are commanded to provide for their destitute parents whatever is necessary to sustain life. And if a son should happen not to have the wherewithal to do it, common sense also interprets the law to command him to get support for his parent by his own industry or the help of friends. The declamations of the schoolroom raise an objection about putting an infant in chains because it did not nourish its parent, but the common sense of mankind interprets the law as not threatening to chain children who have no way of fulfilling what it commands. Likewise common sense infers that a legislator wants his commands to be carried out.

Luther accepts none of these points as applying to the commandments of God, but only sings his old refrain that imperative, optative, and subjunctive verbs do not declare what a person can do but what he ought to do, conflicting violently with his own rule, which commands that we not depart from simple language and common sense unless an obvious absurdity forces us to take refuge in figures. In order to exclude the simple sense of the words that agrees with common sense, he fabricates figures and monstrous inferences. And not content with that, he fictitiously attributes to my *Discussion* inferences she never dreamed of: 'stretch out your hand, that is, you can stretch out your hand by your own power; make yourselves a new heart, that is, you can make a new heart; believe in Christ, that is, you can believe, etc.'[483] And because of these inferences, which he himself makes up out of his head according to his own whim, he lashes *Discussion* with amazing insults: she is blind, drunk, snoring, somnolent, stupid, she forgets herself, whereas in fact *Discussion* infers nothing more from imperative verbs than that there is something inherent in our will which keeps the grace of God from being in vain and excludes the sheer necessity of events. This is the argument of Augustine,[484] to whom Luther usually defers and whose opinion he boasts he is following, and *Discussion* is in disrepute as if she were the first to think up these conclusions. But at the same time he overlooks how he was dealt with by John, the bishop of Rochester,[485] and many others. He preferred the crafty scheme of pouring all his bile, all his wit, on *Discussion*, with no thought of what a craftsman he would have challenged if I wanted to repay him tit for tat.[486]

---

[480] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 701:19–23 / LW 33 164
[481] Erasmus means moral actions like those described in the following sentence.
[482] Cf 431–3 above.

But he has found us another knot with which he may bind 'Proteus' – for he is marvellously delighted with this pleasantry, though he himself is more truly an Empusa than a Proteus. For Proteus when he is tied up tight reveals the truth; Empusa is never anything but Empusa, a vain and empty spectre.[487] 'It is not enough,' he says, 'to say "there can be a figure"; you must demonstrate by compelling arguments that a figure is indeed present.'[488] Come now, since it is beyond controversy that there are innumerable places in Scripture where figures are employed, then just as Luther demands that we demonstrate with compelling arguments that there is a figure, we in turn will demand of him that he show us with such arguments that there is no figure of speech. He will throw up to us the simple literal meaning, from which we are forbidden to depart unless some obvious absurdity forces us to do so. First of all, what he assumes here is patently false. Otherwise when we say in the Lord's Prayer, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' according to the simple literal sense we are asking God for nothing but bread, although even Luther himself confesses that in the word 'bread' there is contained whatever is included in the necessities of life. Here you immediately have a figure to which perhaps some sort of necessity forces us. But what necessity forces us to understand in the word 'bread' spiritual grace and the body of Lord? Actually Luther considers this meaning to be the primary one, and in this he is in agreement with the orthodox. And so you have a second figure to which we are not forced by any absurdity.

---

[483] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 701:23–6 / LW 33 164

[484] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 21 n69 and 341–2 above.

[485] John Fisher wrote a long refutation of Luther (1523); see CWE 76 introduction lxx and n149; *A Discussion* CWE 76 16 n49; *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 98 n8.

[486] See n254 above.

[487] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 700:18 / LW 33 162; on Proteus and Empusa, see *Adagia* II ii 74 and n371 above.

[488] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 702:7–9 / LW 33 164

[*Is the hardening of Pharaoh's heart a figure of speech?*]
But at this point, in the service of his cause, he prescribes other rules. I have already shown that a meaning that is manifestly absurd and abhorrent to common sense and intolerable to pious ears has driven us to the refuge of figural language. For who could bear that God, who is supremely good, hardens the heart of the king in order to make his own glory more illustrious through the king's destruction?[489] But Luther will deny that the meaning here is absurd, although it has seemed so not only to common sense but also to the leaders and people of the church; and in order to show that, he will take refuge not only in utterly absurd figures but also in God as he is not preached, whose will he will command us to adore and forbid us to investigate. But still he does not deign to show with compelling arguments whether this is an appropriate place to apply the will which must be adored, although he requires us to demonstrate conclusively that there is a figure in the words of Scripture, at the same time excluding the authority of all the ancient orthodox Fathers, which he will not allow to give us even the tiniest bit of support, while he himself cites such fellows as Wyclif and Hus[490] as his authorities. Furthermore, even if we grant to Luther alone exegetical ability equal to that of all the Doctors of the church, nevertheless the authority of Scripture will be rendered ambiguous in two ways, and Luther's rule, even if it were true, would be of no use to us. For first of all, there would be controversy about whether or not the text requires a figure and whether it presents such an obvious absurdity that it is necessary to

* * * * *

[489] Cf Exod 4:21, 10:1–2.
[490] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 12 n35 and *Hyperaspistes* 1 CWE 76 133 n199.

have recourse to figural language. And then if a figure is conceded, it will be doubtful which figure should be allowed, for not infrequently this is a source of dissension among interpreters. Finally, if Luther runs aground in the shallows of this question and takes refuge in the secret will, shall we listen to him? Where, then, is the end of the controversy? Where? The result is that we must prove our figure either by miracles or by the strongest arguments.[491] But miracles should rather be demanded from those who bring forth paradoxes against the consensus of all the ages. And in fact even miracles are open to slander. In the end what arguments are completely certain? For what can be so certain that Luther will not reject it if it goes against his case? If we have run out of arguments, he himself should remember to perform what he commanded us to do.

Here he once more reminds me of my compact with him, which is currently such that everyone understands I am contending with this fellow under very unfair rules, namely that I am to receive not the tiniest bit of help from the interpretation and definitions of the most approved Doctors of the church, the schools of the theologians, or councils, however general.[492] Someone who accepts these rules is an agreeable opponent; someone who demands and prescribes them, even if he wins, seems not to have conquered, no more than if an unarmed man should contend with a fighter armed to the teeth. But he is more candid here in that he proclaims with no dissimulation that among ecclesiastical writers no one has handled Holy Scripture more ineptly and absurdly than Origen and Jerome.[493] For in his whole pamphlet, under the pretext of attacking Lady *Discussion* he has raged against the holy Doctors of the church. Such a figure he thought very witty! But at the same time he lost sight of the rule he laid down, which allows us to take refuge in figures of speech whenever an absurd meaning drives us away from the literal sense; here he does not allow this but takes refuge in God as not preached. But we do not yet hear the thunderbolts of God; I see smokescreens and hear sophistical subterfuges: 'Erasmus makes a particular statement into a general one. Here God is said to burden or harden the heart of Pharaoh in that he did not immediately punish his wickedness; therefore whenever God is said to spare sinners, he hardens them; whenever he afflicts them, he has mercy on them. What is

* * * * *

[491] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 702:31 / LW 33 166

[492] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 703:24–6 / LW 33 167

[493] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 703:27–8 / LW 33 167; Erasmus had relied on Origen and Jerome in interpreting the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (*A Discussion* CWE 76 46–8).

peculiar to some passages should not be applied throughout all of Scripture.'[494] What, then, is Luther's point? Does God never afflict anyone out of mercy? What indeed is the Hebrew wise man saying: 'Whom God loves he chastizes; he whips every son whom he accepts'? What does God threaten in Hosea: 'I will not punish your daughters when they have committed fornication'?[495] God displays his mercy to us in more than one way, sometimes consoling us with happy events, sometimes chastizing us with afflictions. So too he displays his anger in more than one way, sometimes inflicting terrible punishments, like those deserved by Sodom and Gomorrah, sometimes leaving the sinner to his own urges. Luther, then, is entirely off target here when he dreams up such monstrous conclusions, as if it would be open to anyone to interpret anything in any way if we accept this interpretation.

But still, the examples he proposes[496] are a bit less absurd than the interpretations which Luther presents to us: 'merit is promise,' 'recompense is consequence,' 'to seek is to be on the road, but in such a way that you do not seek.'[497] 'Pharaoh hardened himself through my mildness'; 'God hardens our hearts, that is, we ourselves harden them when God postpones punishment, etc' – what is so monstrously absurd here? After all, we read in Exodus 8[:15]: 'But when Pharaoh saw that there was some respite, he made his heart heavy.' Therefore Augustine, in his book addressed to Valentinus on free will, is not afraid to say: 'God hardened through a just judgment; Pharaoh himself did so through his free will.'[498] Now my *Discussion* does not say anything so inept,[499] but rather this is what she says: 'He was created with a will that he could turn in either direction, and by his own choice

* * * * *

494 The passage within quotation marks is Erasmus' summary of Luther's argument against Erasmus' (and Origen's and Jerome's) interpretation of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 703:28–704:27 / LW 33 167–8).

495 Prov 3:12 and Heb 12:6; Hos 4:14

496 That is, the examples of false interpretation which Luther says would result from accepting the idea that God hardened Pharaoh's heart by not punishing him, such as thinking that God's sending of the Jews to Babylon was merciful and sending Christ into the world was an act of hardening (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 703:30–704:14 / LW 33 167–8).

497 Here the Latin text has only a comma, which makes the two following propositions seem to belong to the same series of statements by Luther. In fact, they represent the interpretation Erasmus makes of the texts about Pharaoh, as the following question makes clear.

498 *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 23.45 PL 44 11

499 Erasmus is not saying that Augustine is inept, but rather that Luther is, as in the interpretations presented earlier in this paragraph.

he directed it to evil, for he preferred to follow his own will rather than to obey God's commandments. But God used this evil will of Pharaoh's for his own glory and his people's salvation, and to make it clearer that men who resist God's will strive in vain. Just so a wise king or father uses the cruelty of people he hates in order to punish the wicked.'[500] This is the way my *Discussion* puts it.

Why is it absurd to say that God has mercy when he lashes someone to make him repent, since pious men also say that he has mercy when he sends a hopeless sinner to hell so that he will not heap up a heavier damnation by living longer? If God in one or two places in Scripture is said to harden by putting off punishment and to have mercy by inflicting it immediately, why must we immediately call affliction mercy and kindness hardening in every place? For this is the conclusion Luther draws: 'Therefore, so far as God is concerned, by perpetual kindness he does nothing but harden; by perpetual censure he does nothing but have mercy.'[501] If it is correct to draw a universal from a particular proposition, since it has been shown that in Scripture there exists affliction that is merciful and restraint that is wrathful, Luther can enjoy his own syllogism. I said no such thing; I investigate the meaning of this passage from the context.

Now, just as if it were proved that in Holy Scripture 'to afflict' means nothing but 'to have mercy' and 'to harden' nothing but 'to spare,' he indulges in amazing tomfoolery and is enormously pleased with himself. Not to respond to all the trifles of this man of leisure, God as preached never afflicts a person in this life except to call upon him to repent or to lessen his punishment in hell; he never bestows joy except to encourage the recognition of divine goodness. But the good use both the goodness and the severity of God for their own good; the bad abuse both to bring about a bad outcome for themselves. God is not to blame for this outcome, but rather they are to blame for rejecting impelling grace. He impels by afflictions; he impels by prosperity; he impels by granting time for repentance. He shows mercy, therefore, when he afflicts the good and the curable; he hardens when he afflicts the incurable and those who have turned away. He consoles the good, mingling joy with sorrow; he hardens the bad by granting them prosperity. There is no need to take refuge in the secret will of God, since a satisfactory account can be given why some are rendered better and others worse. God can indeed employ force on the human will and

* * * * *

[500] *A Discussion* CWE 76 47–8

[501] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 704:25–7 / LW 33 168; Luther attributes this conclusion to Erasmus.

drive it wherever he wants to. But generally he does not do this but rather brings impelling grace to bear. If our will embraces it, it is followed by mercy, though the very impelling itself springs from mercy. But if our will turns it away, God's goodness on occasion hardens the heart. God impelled Pharaoh in both ways, by the severity of the plagues and by the easy remission of the evils he had inflicted. I grant that. And he hardened in both ways, giving him an opportunity by which he knew that Pharaoh would become worse. Nevertheless he did not inflict an evil mind on him, but rather he employed and used the malice of the wicked king for the sake of his own glory. Therefore, whether God inflicts sorrow or joy, he hardens the wicked unless he adds grace. God does not deny impelling or preparatory grace to either good or bad persons while they are in this life. Whoever turns it away, since he abuses his freedom of choice, deserves to be denied sanctifying grace because he rejected impelling grace.

Now as for his bringing up the probable opinion that free will cannot even choose the good without grace, I have already time and again distinguished willing effectively from willing ineffectively; time and again I have given notice that in the course of the disputation I have not just one opinion in mind and that I take this stance so as to do away with disapproved opinions. Pharaoh began to come to his senses. Where did this wish come from? Not from sanctifying grace but from impelling grace. But if at that time he had applied the power of his free will to the action of grace, another grace would have succeeded it. Now if someone asks, 'Why didn't God use his all-powerful will to turn Pharaoh's heart, since he could have done so?' I reply: because he knew that he had to be hardened further, and by his previous evil deeds he deserved to be left to his own wickedness. In just the same way God handed the philosophers over to their reprobate understanding, because for the sake of their own passions they abused the gift of knowledge, which called them to the worship and love of the true God.[502] Luther assumes, therefore, that without grace free will can do nothing except evil, and from this he concludes whatever he wishes, making no distinction between free will undermined by sin and free will liberated, no distinction between impelling and sanctifying grace, no distinction between 'not to be able' and 'not to be able in an unqualified way.' 'But God,' he says, 'gives grace to whomever he wishes; therefore his will is the reason that in the same circumstances some turn away from sin, some become more hardened.'[503] Nothing happens without the will of God, I grant it, but

* * * * *

[502] See Rom 1:28.

[503] Erasmus loosely paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 705:30–6 / LW 33 170.

generally his will depends on our will. He willed that Judas and Pharaoh be hardened precisely because they had neglected impelling grace. I say that this grace is not lacking to anyone, and if it is lacking to someone handed over to a reprobate understanding, he deserves it because of previous actions which took their origin only from free will. But where there is nothing but nature, there is no deserving; where there is nothing but sheer necessity, there is no merit, much less so where there is no human action at all, as Luther teaches, unless we think an axe used by a workman deserves something.

But in order to reject the simile of the wax and the mud, one of which is hardened by the sun, the other melted, he wants to have one mode of free will in all men.[504] Who will be so generous as to grant him this? Just as the intellect is more clear in those who have not been undone by passion and excess, so too the will is more prone to good and more curable in those who have simply gone astray and who practise moral virtues as best they can than it is in those who have become hardened by a long-standing habit of vice. Accordingly, the wax is a mind that is simple and readily responsive to grace; the mud is a mind that is headstrong and now even exulting in the worst vices. I do not make two temperaments out of one free will, but I clarify diverse circumstances by providing a simile, unless perhaps Luther is so ignorant of comparisons that, when the material from which we make the comparison is substantially different, he assumes that so too free will in its whole nature must also be diverse. The human body has a single nature. Nevertheless one body when it falls ill can readily be cured by medication; another one is given medicine but dies. What is the reason? The one person, by a sober and moderate way of life, made his body readily responsive to the medication; the other, by excess and other vices, had made his unresponsive to medicine. Medication was administered to both; it did one some good, it killed the other. But he brings up another difficulty. 'If we ascribe hardening and conversion to free will according to whether it embraces grace or rejects it, there will be no election by God. But if God is deprived of the power and the wisdom to elect, what will he be but an idol of Fortune, the divinity through whom all things happen at random? And finally we will come to the point where people are saved or damned without God's knowledge, so that God will not decide by a certain election who is to be saved or damned, but by offering everyone a general leniency that tolerates and hardens, and then a mercy that reproaches and punishes,

* * * * *

[504] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 705:37–706:8 / LW 33 170–1. Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 46 and n206; the simile of the wax is from Origen.

he will leave it up to mankind whether they wish to be saved or damned, while in the meantime he himself has gone off to a banquet of the Ethiopians, as Homer says.'[505] I report the fellow's witless and blasphemous jokes, however reluctantly, to make it clear to his overenthusiastic adherents what kind of evangelist they have got. Since I have always brought together the action of free will and the primary assistance of grace in good men, how can it be that a person is saved or damned without God's knowledge? And how can God become nothing more than an idol of Fortune, when his eternal wisdom governs the universe? Just as his foreknowledge, predestination, and will do not generally hinder human free will, so too his election does not. He elected Paul to preach the gospel among the gentiles, and he elected him from eternity; having elected him, in his own good time he called him; having called him, he furnished him with grace; having furnished grace, he increased it; and nevertheless Paul said, 'Not I but the grace of God with me,' and 'In me grace was not in vain,' and 'I have worked harder than all of them,' and 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race.'[506]

The next section contains nothing but blasphemies, and he sings that old lying refrain, refuted time after time, that I attribute everything to free will without the assistance of grace, although I have laid it down that free will cannot effectively will even a good deed without grace. And just as if he had felicitously exploded Origen's interpretation, he goes back to his own dogma that free will is the kingdom of Satan and that everything happens by sheer necessity; otherwise God would not be God.[507] And at the same time he does not notice that all this falls more on the holy Doctors of the church than on my *Discussion*. He does not give a damn about the consensus of them all, since he himself not only inflicts his interpretations on us but also prescribes to the world at his own whim the rules by which Scripture should be expounded. He asks me: 'Who gave Origen and Jerome the authority to interpret it in this fashion?'[508] Indeed, who gave Luther the authority to prescribe such rules of exposition, which are first of all deceptive, and then patently false, and finally not even observed by the prescriber himself? He says we should not depart from the literal sense unless the words contain an absurdity which is at odds with some article

* * * * *

[505] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 706:20–1 / LW 33 171. Luther is quoting *Odyssey* 1.22; *Iliad* 1.423.

[506] 1 Cor 15:10; 2 Tim 4:7

[507] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 706:22–707:11 / LW 33 171–2

[508] Cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 703:26–8 / LW 33 167.

of the faith.[509] And I think, if someone pressed him, he would define an article of faith in whatever way seems convenient to the case he is making. What necessity forced Paul to interpret the history of Hagar's son and Sarah's son figuratively?[510] Nothing in the historical sense is absurd or contrary to the articles of the faith. Very often we read that God is angry, raging, or repentant. What article of the faith is contravened if we believe these emotions are truly present in God? If someone replies that it is impious to attribute human emotions to God, I will reply that according to Luther's rule I hold to what is expressed in Holy Scripture, that there is nothing absurd about it though it may seem so to the flesh, and that we must not scrutinize how God is angry or repentant. Who will force me here to accept a figurative sense? Furthermore, how much figurative speech did Luther introduce to explain the Ten Commandments,[511] and also the Psalms,[512] where the plain language contained no obvious absurdity? Perhaps he will say that an article of faith is whatever is expressed in Holy Scripture. But there one expression often conflicts with another, as I have already shown.[513] Is that any reason why he should apply figurative interpretation to places that harm his case whenever he wants to, and reject all figures of speech in other places which seem to promote his case, and, if he gets stuck in explaining some absurdity, take refuge in the secret will of God? And the fellow who does this thinks he is debating, for heaven's sake, and he organizes a triumph, as if it would be a difficult matter for anyone at all to conquer in this manner. By these rules a pigmy will throw down a giant.[514]

* * * * *

---

[509] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 700:31–3 / LW 33 162

[510] Gal 4:22–31

[511] In *Decem praecepta Wittenbergensi praedicata populo* . . . (Leipzig: Valentinus Schumanus 1519) Luther says that 'kill' in the fifth commandment includes anger expressed in word or gesture or simply felt in the heart (sig E5; WA 1 462–3). In *Compendiosa decem praeceptorum explanatio* . . . (Augustae: Silvanus Ottmar 1520) Luther interpreted 'kill' in the fifth commandment to include not only murder but also anger against one's brother, calling him a fool, cursing him or defaming him, envy, or plundering (sig A3v; WA 1 261).

[512] Like almost all commentators on the Psalms Luther often interpreted expressions figuratively, even when it is not necessary to do so. For example, *oculus* 'eye' in Ps 6:8 he takes to mean *aspectus* 'appearance,' *sol* 'sun' in Ps 8:4 to mean 'Christ,' and *coelos* 'the heavens' in Ps 18 (17):10 to mean *apostolos* 'apostles'; see *Operationes in psalmos 1519–1521* WA 5 212, 267, 503.

[513] See *Hyperaspistes* 1 CWE 76 240.

[514] Cf Otto no 1495.

He complains that I have not kept the agreement because I reported the interpretation of Origen.[515] If he accepts no interpretation, why does he himself fabricate so many unheard-of interpretations whenever it is convenient? If he does accept interpretation, since he has the same right to contend with me as with them, why does he accept interpretation as coming from me but reject it as coming from Origen and Jerome? But in fact Augustine and Theophylact and Chrysostom agree with Origen in relieving mankind from Luther's absolute necessity,[516] and they do not take refuge in that secret will which is only to be adored. And if we believe Chrysostom, Paul says 'And you, O man, who are you to answer back to God?' not in order to keep the objector from resolving the difficulty but rather in order to reject his curiosity and render him more receptive to a solution of the difficulty, since in that sort of question many points arise that can only be perceived by the pious and likewise many for which no reason can be given.[517] For example, Augustine proposes this difficulty: many infants born to Christians through no fault of their parents die without baptism and go to hell, like those who die in the womb of their mother or during the birth itself, whereas some infants born to Jews or pagans but stolen by Christians and secretly baptized go to eternal life after they have died. He says that it is not our place to inquire why God allows this to happen.[518] Now if I had cited only the opinion of Origen, he could complain that I had burdened him with human authority. As it is, I draw up a comparison of passages, which according to Augustine is the best way to expound Scripture,[519] I give the reasons for the absurdity that drives us to figurative language, I show the congruence of the interpretation with what precedes and follows.[520] And so let him imagine if he wishes that it is my interpretation and let him stop complaining about the holy Doctors of the church.

* * * * *

---

[515] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 703:24–6 / LW 33 167; *A Discussion* CWE 76 46–8

[516] Augustine *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistola ad Romanos* 54 CSEL 84 36–9; Theophylact *Expositio in epistolam ad Romanos* on Rom 9:15 PG 124 466; Chrysostom *Commentarius in epistolam ad Romanos* 16.8 PG 60 559–60. For the interpretations of Origen and Jerome see *A Discussion* CWE 76 47.

[517] Chrysostom *Commentarius in epistolam ad Romanos* 16.7 PG 60 557–9; Erasmus later quotes a long passage from Chrysostom which includes what he attributes to Chrysostom here (532–3 below)

[518] Augustine *Contra secundum Iuliani responsionem imperfectum opus* 6.12 PL 45 1523; *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 22.44 PL 44 909

[519] Augustine *De doctrina christiana* 3.26, 28 CCSL 32 99–100

[520] *A Discussion* CWE 76 46–53

Then he gets down to examining the reasons cited by *Discussion* why the orthodox here take refuge in figural language: 'It is abhorrent to Christian ears, it is abhorrent to common sense, to say that God, who is good by nature, injects malice into the human heart or even adds to it, something that it seems not even a just human being would do.'[521] To this Luther responds as follows: 'What article of faith does this absurdity offend against?'[522] I reply: if whatever is expressed in Holy Scripture is an article of faith, this absurdity conflicts with the text 'You are just, Lord, and your judgment is right';[523] it conflicts with the text 'and his mercy is without limit.'[524] It is even more absurd to attribute to God what would be absurd in a human king. That is the article of faith, for which it would be easy for anyone to bring forward hundreds of examples from the Holy Books. If this absurdity does not seem to be a reason why we should take refuge in figurative language, Luther is outrageous when he takes such refuge not to avoid absurdity but to introduce it, as he surely does when he interprets 'merit' as 'promise,' 'reward' as 'consequence,' 'to seek' as 'to be on the road,' 'to act' as 'to be acted upon like an axe.' In those cases why does he not say, 'These are the plain and perfectly clear words of God; I do not accept figurative language; I hold tenaciously to what is said.' If I should say that this absurdity conflicts with the decision of all orthodox teachers and the whole Catholic church, perhaps I would move the fellow to laughter. So much for the article of faith.

'Or who is offended,' he says, 'by this absurdity? Human reason is offended, who, although she is blind, deaf, foolish, wicked, and sacrilegious in all her words and works, is brought in at this point as the judge of the works and words of God.'[525] So says Luther. Bravo! how consistent this hyperbolical fellow is! Is it true that human reason, even that of the saints, is blind and deaf concerning all the words and deeds of God? What spirit, then, revealed this secret to him? If human reason is so blind that it sees nothing, why did Paul attribute so much to the pagan philosophers as to say that from created things they understood the invisible things of God, even so far as to know the sempiternal godhead? And Paul calls this reason

* * * * *

[521] Not a direct quotation but a summary of *A Discussion* CWE 76 75–7. Luther had paraphrased the same discussion at *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 707:12–19 / LW 33 172–3.

[522] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 707:21–2 / LW 33 173

[523] Ps 118:137

[524] Not an exact scriptural quotation, but the phrase 'multitudo misericordiae tuae' is frequently applied to God in the Psalms and elsewhere in the Bible (for example, Pss 5:8, 68:14). For the form of the locution cf Ps 146:5.

[525] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 707:21–4 / LW 33 173

the 'revelation of God.' Orthodox teachers interpret it as the light of God's countenance, which he has stamped upon us;[526] they all grant that it has been darkened by the sin of our first parents, but all of them deny that it has been extinguished. And what good did this reason do them? 'It made them inexcusable.'[527] The impelling grace was that knowledge of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God; but it was due to free will that they neglected the grace offered to them. If no grace had been offered, they would have seemed excusable. As it is, grace was offered, and if the effort of the human will had gone to meet it, grace would have brought forth grace, as the proverb has it.[528] If you wish, go through what Socrates, the Stoics, the Peripatetics, and Epictetus handed down about the aim of doing good and the character of a good life, and then say that human reason is blind, foolish, and wicked in all matters. He goes on to hyperbolize.[529] 'Under such a pretext of absurdity,' he says, 'we will deny all the articles of the faith: that Christ is God and man, that he is the son of a virgin, that he rose from the dead.'[530] Perhaps Luther would be telling the truth if an authority like himself presented these paradoxes to us with arguments like his. As it is, the miracles of prophecy, the fulfilment of promises, the evangelical writings, the blood of the martyrs, the authority of the apostles, the soundness of the Doctors of the church, and the consensus of the whole church have persuaded us that these doctrines are absolutely certain. And there is not, in fact, any absurdity in them, even if there are many paradoxes. Everything declares the wonderful wisdom of God and his ineffable kindness towards us, but this absurdity of his brands God as cruel and unjust. In fact, if figurative language were as dangerous as Luther makes out, we would do better to fear his figures, which you will not find in the poets or among upright men. And so let him stop comparing quite dissimilar things as if they were equivalent to each other. He promised us the thunderbolts of God. So far we have heard nothing but insults. But he is still playing the prelude; soon he will present the mysteries to the candidates for initiation.

He cockadoodledoos once more that even though we grant there is a figure, still there is no avoiding the absurdity: 'If free will can do nothing without grace, we must attribute everything to God, who gives grace

* * * * *

[526] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 24; *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 272–3 nn953 and 954.

[527] Rom 1:19–20

[528] *Adagia* I i 34

[529] The first eight letters of this Greek word are transliterated into the Latin alphabet.

[530] A paraphrase of *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 707:24–7 / LW 33 173

to some and denies it to others just as he pleases and with no regard to merits. If free will can do everything without grace, that is even more absurd.'[531] This refrain which Luther sings so often goes beyond what even Pelagius taught. In the introduction I propose only the opinions of the orthodox, rejecting none of them, so that I will be free during the argument to call for help from whichever I want to invoke. In the conclusion I show which one I find more acceptable, but I do so in such a way as not to condemn any of them which have not been condemned by the church. You will never find any of them that attributes everything to free will without grace. Nor do I ever say that free will cannot do anything at all. This is what is said in my *Discussion*: 'I favour the opinion of those who attribute something to free will, but most to grace.' And a little later: 'Why, you ask, attribute anything at all to free will? So that something can deservedly be imputed to the wicked, who have willingly fallen short of the grace of God; to clear God of the false accusation of cruelty and injustice; to free us of despair, protect us from presumption, and spur us on to moral endeavour. For these reasons nearly everyone admits the existence of free will; but, lest we claim anything for ourselves, they assert that it can achieve nothing without the continual grace of God. "What is free will good for," someone will ask, "if it can achieve nothing?" What good is a man altogether, I reply, if God works in him as the potter works with clay?'[532] These words in *A Discussion* declare that free will does something, but that it cannot attain eternal salvation without the constant assistance of grace. When Augustine was already old, in the book he addressed to Valentinus in his old age, he attributed most of all to grace, but still ascribed something to free will. In the same book, when he mentions preparatory or impelling grace, which does not yet bestow justification but leads to it – and he attributes to it some good, though imperfect, works – he is not far from the third opinion,[533] which claims that mankind, by its natural powers, can make such progress through morally good works that it earns justifying grace at least congruously, that is, that God in his immense goodness will presently not deny what is asked of him.[534]

* * * * *

---

531 Erasmus' summary of *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 707:32–708:18 / LW 33 173–4

532 *A Discussion* CWE 76 86–7

533 Erasmus makes it clear that he is referring here to the opinion of the scholastics, which is actually the second in the list he gives in his introduction to *A Discussion*.

534 In *De gratia et libro arbitrio*, which he wrote about three years before his death in 430, Augustine comes as close as he ever does in his later works to the doctrine of *meritum de congruo*, though he is probably further from it than Erasmus suggests here. The passage in Augustine (PL 44 901) is important enough

He takes Origen to task for his comment that God did not say 'I have created you for this purpose' but rather 'I raised you up for this purpose.' He raised him up by providing an occasion for greater wickedness; for 'God saw all the things he had created and they were very good.' 'He said this,' says Luther, 'before the fall of mankind. But it soon follows, in the third chapter, how man became evil when he was deserted by God and left to himself.'[535] That is a strange thing to say. Are the things God created therefore not very good now? If Satan is very good in so far as he is a creature of God, why cannot man be called very good in a similar way? I pass over what he says here, that man was deserted by God and thus lapsed into death. Quite the contrary, it was rather man who deserted God by turning himself away from God through his free will, just as the bad angels withdrew from

* * * * *

to quote and translate at length: 'Qui ergo vult facere Dei mandatum et non potest, iam quidem habet voluntatem bonam, sed adhuc parvam et invalidam: poterit autem, cum magnam habuerit et robustam ... Ipsam [plenam] charitatem apostolus Petrus nondum habuit, quando timore Dominum ter negavit ... Et tamen quamvis parva et imperfecta, non deerat, quando dicebat Domino, *Animam meam pro te ponam* (*Ioan* 13:37): putabat enim se posse, quod se velle sentiebat. Et quis istam etsi parvam dare coeperat charitatem, nisi ille qui praeparat voluntatem, et cooperando perficit, quod operando incipit? Quoniam ipse ut velimus operatur incipiens, qui volentibus cooperatur perficiens. ... Ut ergo velimus, sine nobis operatur; cum autem volumus, et sic volumus ut faciamus, nobiscum cooperatur: tamen sine illo vel operante ut velimus, vel cooperante cum volumus, ad bona pietatis opera nihil valemus' ('Therefore whoever wants to do what God commands and cannot, does already have a good will, but it is still small and weak, but he will be able to when it is full-grown and robust ... The apostle Peter did not yet have such full charity when he denied the Lord three times out of fear ... But charity was not lacking, however small and imperfect, when he said to the Lord "I will lay down my life for you" [John 13:37]: for he thought he was able to do what he perceived that he wanted to do. And who began to give even this small charity if not he who prepares the will and by cooperating brings to fulfilment what he began by operating? Because the very same one who operates in the beginning so that we will cooperates with us when we will and brings the will to fulfilment. Therefore he operates without us so that we ourselves can will; but when we will, and will in such a fashion that we perform, he cooperates with us: nevertheless, we are not at all able to achieve good works of piety without him, either as he operates so that we will or cooperates when we will'). Erasmus' preparatory or impelling grace is what Augustine here calls operating grace; see *A Discussion* CWE 76 24 and n79, 30 and n109; *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 136 and n222. On *meritum de congruo* see *A Discussion* CWE 76 28–9 and nn103–6.

[535] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 708:19–23 / LW 33 174; cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 47 and nn212–13.

him, so that they are called apostates in Greek.[536] Here Luther brings up another siege-engine against us, original sin, which he so exaggerates and amplifies that not even grace acting in a person can perform anything but sin. We are all born sons of wrath.[537] But actually, as I showed, in that place Paul can be taken to be speaking about the filthy vices of mortals, and what he calls nature is not a condition but rather something that belongs to us, that is, to our will.[538] But let us grant that all men are born sons of wrath. The sin of another still does not have so much power in a person that it leaves no seeds of piety and virtue in him, since even in animals we see some seeds of these qualities, such as chaste marriage in pigeons and turtle-doves, reverence and shame in elephants, gratitude in dogs, devotion to their offspring in female asses, political organization in bees and ants. But everyone resembles our first parents in being prone to sin, although some are more so, some less. Does anyone ever attribute wickedness to infants or to adolescents of good character, not yet contaminated by the business of life? For not every fault constitutes wickedness. That proneness is not totally taken away by the grace of baptism, but it is lessened. Pharaoh was a vessel of wrath, prepared for destruction, born unclean of unclean seed, but if he was influenced only by original sin, he would have responded to impelling grace more readily. As it was, he was calloused by a habit of sinning. But that hardness first arose from free will, and it grew immeasurably through free will. Still I would not venture to say that he could not have turned to better things when he began to yield; but if he could not have, he himself, by what he deserved earlier, provided the reason he was handed over to a reprobate understanding.[539] Therefore God used the depraved will of a wicked king to punish a people who were similar to their king, since they allowed the Hebrew strangers to be oppressed in such merciless slavery.

He also brings up that point which has been refuted by others: 'The Lord made everything for his own purposes, even the wicked for the evil day.'[540] For God does not make wicked people; otherwise he could be said to have made all people wicked.[541] But he is said to have made a wicked and incorrigible man for the evil day in the same way as he prepared a

* * * * *

[536] The Greek ἀποστάτης 'runaway,' 'rebel' is derived from ἀφίστημι 'to withdraw from,' 'rebel against.'

[537] Eph 2:3; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 708:23–5 / LW 33 174

[538] *A Discussion* CWE 76 23–7

[539] Cf Rom 1:28; cf also 459–60 above.

[540] Prov 16:4; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 708:26–7 / LW 33 174. Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 63 and n306.

[541] That is, people are not wicked by God's act of creation; if they were, all people created would be wicked.

LB X 1401C

vessel of anger for destruction: if he had created them for destruction, no one would be saved. Rather he uses the malice of wicked persons for the good of the elect. And Latin codices do not have 'the Lord made all things' but rather 'he worked,' and someone who guides and governs also 'works.' And in this way God governs past, present, and future events, both good and bad, so that they resound with a certain admirable harmony. The Septuagint presents us with a quite different meaning: *πάντα τὰ ἔργα τοῦ ταπεινοῦ φανερὰ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ, οἱ δ᾽ ἀσεβεῖς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κακῇ ὀλοῦνται*; that is, 'All the deeds of a humble person are made manifest to God, but the wicked will perish on the evil day.' But it is silly to quibble about God generating the wicked but not generating them as wicked, like schoolboys disputing about griffins. As the highest cause of all things, God produces and does all things, and among them mankind, but he does not generate anyone's wickedness. He generates a nature that is corrupted, but he does not generate the corruption, which springs from Satan and free will. But here Luther admits that God does not generate sin, although elsewhere he professes that God works good and evil alike in everyone. And he provides a simile: 'God propagates the corrupt nature of mankind in such a way that he is like a good workman fashioning statues out of useless and rotten wood.'[542] But these subsidiary points will be discussed elsewhere, in the proper place. He opens up another crack to slip through: 'God saw that all things were good, but the text does not say "Mankind looked and they were very good."'[543] Quite the contrary, this was seen by the prophet who wrote: 'All you works of the Lord, bless the Lord.'[544] How will they bless the Lord if they are not good? Unseemly works do not redound to the glory of the workman. Therefore men also see that all things that God made are very good, for God is not the source of bad things. Afflictions can be said to be troublesome; in themselves they are neither truly bad nor truly good. Luther would have had a more likely argument to refute Origen's annotation if he had said that God was speaking there only about created things and natural action.[545] Now sin is something contrary to nature; for nothing could be more opposed to nature than for a creature to resist the creator.

* * * * *

---

[542] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 708:31–3 / LW 33 174–5

[543] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 708:34–7 / LW 33 175

[544] Dan 3:57

[545] Origen argued that God did not create Pharaoh to glorify God by falling but only raised him up to do so. For Pharaoh, like the other created things God saw, would have been good, not wicked. Erasmus now remarks that Origen's point is invalid if what God saw as good includes only created things and their natural actions, since sin is an unnatural action and would hence not be seen by God as good.

[Does God's omnipotence produce evil?]

Finally, having confuted figural interpretation, he deigns to reveal to us how in Scripture God can be said to harden the heart, to hand over to a reprobate understanding, to seduce a person and draw him into error, and to seduce a prophet. He assumes that reason and *Discussion* alike will grant that 'God works all in all and that without him nothing can be effected or effective.'[546] Let reason answer for herself; at any rate Jupiter in Homer denies that he is the cause of evil in mortals but says that they themselves rush to their destruction through their own folly.[547] For *Discussion* I reply that she never said that God works all in all. She professed that grace cooperates with a person in all good works.[548] *Discussion* never either thought or said that God commits adultery in us or gets drunk, lies, envies, or kills in us. Even though these things can seem to be in some sense true, still I usually like to avoid such statements. Hence if he does not have any other grounds for his proof, he will accomplish nothing with *Discussion*. There is not even any agreement about Luther's statement that God works in us as a workman handles an axe or a saw. In Acts Paul approves of the saying of a pagan poet, 'In him we live, move, and have our being,' where the poet is speaking of natural motion.[549] To be is the first foundation of nature; to live is the next; and to move is the third, unless you want to refer 'to move' to the process of growth. For in an embryo of a living thing, the motion of growth is prior to animate life, in which motion inheres, that is, the action of life.[550] But Luther should have distinguished that general action of the first cause in all created things from its particular actions, with which we are dealing here and about which Paul is talking in 1 Corinthians 12[:6]: 'And there are divisions of workings, but the same God who works all in all.' But actually in this passage 'works' is not ἐργάζετἀι but ὁ ἐνεργῶν, which is closer to a 'helpful impulse' or 'drive' than to 'working'; in this way love acts in a lover – that is, as an impulse. And he is talking there not about any human actions whatsoever, but rather about the various gifts of the Holy Spirit. But in fact, even these are not active in the pious in the way a work-

* * * * *

[546] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 709:10–11 / LW 33 175

[547] *Odyssey* 1:32–4

[548] Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 80.

[549] Acts 17:28. The poet is Aratus in *Phaenomena* 5, although Paul's reference is to the succeeding phrase, 'we are his offspring.'

[550] That is, 'to be,' 'to move,' and 'to live' can be matched to two triads in nature: 1/ inanimate things, living things beneath the level of animals, and animals, which move independently; 2/ inanimate things, growing things such as plants (which display the 'motion' of growth), and the action of life in animals

man acts upon a saw – since Paul says that the spirit of prophecy is subject to the prophet – but rather as a rider acts upon a horse. Then, too, the place in Ephesians which Luther incorrectly cites in *Assertion* does not deal with that general motion but rather with the force and effect of the grace that he exerts in the elect. For there, too, the verb is ἐνεργοῦντος: 'who works,' he says, 'all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we may exist for the praise of his glory.'[551] He uses the same word in Philippians: 'For it is God who works in us both the will and the accomplishment': ὁ ἐνεργῶν, a word that signifies impelling grace. But notice the freedom of the will is spoken of: 'in accordance with good will,' in Greek εὐδοκίας, meaning 'the free assent of the mind.'[552] There are also other places in Paul where God is said to work in us, but in good persons; nowhere do we read that he works blasphemies, murders, and adulteries in the bad, even though he frequently permits them to be committed. I think that Luther's spears are dashed to pieces before they fly from his hand.

But let us listen to what he babbles; for he professes that he wants to babble and be silly. He also makes another assumption which is no less outrageous: he equates fallen mankind with Satan, as if both were so turned away from God that they are continually concerned with their passions and cannot will anything good.[553] Satan can answer Luther for himself. I will speak for mankind: his assumption is false, since Paul, speaking in the role of a sinful person, says, 'To wish is in my control, but I do not find a way to accomplish the good.' Indeed in the opening of this passage, he takes on the role of human nature, saying: 'But I once lived without the Law, etc.'[554] Seeds of decency remain in mankind; there also dwells in them a certain striving for what is right and an inclination towards it, although that tendency is different in different people. Therefore a person can also will something good to some extent without the particular gift of grace, but he cannot effectively will the good that leads to salvation without the assistance of grace, which is primary. But everything is attributed to the goodness of God, not because a person does nothing, but because we have received from God everything by which we have any ability, will, activity, or being. And in mankind there is no malicious turning away from God, as there is in Satan, but mankind is weak rather than malicious. The

* * * * *

[551] *Assertio* WA 7 145:26–7 / CWE 76 306; Luther says he is quoting Eph 1:11 but he actually cites a similar text from 1 Cor 12:6.

[552] Phil 2:13; see *A Discussion* CWE 76 68–9 n331.

[553] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 709:8–21 / LW 33 175–6

[554] Rom 7:18 and 7:9

perversity of some people, however, springs not so much from nature as from a habit acquired by heaping graver sins on lighter ones. But Luther is pleased by nothing except hyperbole. How much difference do we already see in children! You would say that some were born for every sort of wickedness and drank in a depraved mind together with their milk. Some are prone to some vices, averse to others. Some are not much inclined either to virtue or to baseness. The character of some is so teachable and pursues virtue to such a degree that it runs ahead of it rather than after it; you would say they were born for piety and complete uprightness of life. And these seeds reveal themselves at an age when children do not yet have the full use of reason, so that we understand that this inequality is inherent in their natures, whether it springs from the composition of their bodies, or from the character of their parents or nurses, or from the stars, or from some other causes unknown to us. Certainly it does not come from baptism, since that is common to all and since even among the pagans there was the same diversity of temperament; nor does it spring from the sin of the first human beings, since that pertains to all alike. Luther makes none of these distinctions but makes mankind equal to Satan in malice; he makes no distinction between a person who is inexperienced and not yet inveterately vicious and someone who by persisting in sin has cast off human sensitivity and has become a beast, so to speak, like Pharaoh, who is the subject of our discussion here.

Deprived of these arguments, what does Luther conclude? For conclude he does. What? 'Satan and a person wicked by nature nevertheless actually exist; and when they sin – and they always sin and cannot not sin – they do something. But God as the first cause acts generally in all created things, whether they are good or evil. Thus it comes about that his all-powerful motion, seizing and driving all things, performs in evil persons whatever crimes they commit, just as it does in Satan. And nevertheless they are not not wicked, because they cannot do otherwise, nor does God, who works all evils, act evilly, just as if a good horseman rides a lame horse, or if a good workman uses a bad axe, he does bad work, even though he is a good workman. But if something hinders someone acting wickedly, nevertheless his wickedness boils over because the same God moves it.' This is what Luther says.[555] You now know how God works evil deeds and how he hardens a person; you have an extraordinary bit of sophistry, drawn not from the Holy Books but from the inner sanctum of the philosophers and

* * * * *

[555] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 709:16–36 / LW 33 176

wrenched to this meaning, though even on this point the philosophers do not agree with each other and none of the philosophers has dared to ascribe evil deeds to false gods. And I have already said that we are not concerned here with the universal motion of the first cause, according to which God works together with both the adulterer and the poisoner and the killer. But in so far as God works these things, they are not evil. For the deeds are something, and the designations 'being' and 'good' are coterminous.[556] Therefore even according to the reasoning of the philosophers it is false that God works evil deeds. And the comparison of the rider and the horse does not fit the case. A horse with only two or three legs does not walk; a lame horse does indeed walk, however awkwardly, but it walks wherever the rider wants it to. But Luther makes a person into a horse straining to go elsewhere than the rider wants it to; accordingly, a comparison with a horse going backwards would be more fitting – though in fact even that would not fit Luther's dogma well enough, since he claims a person does nothing more in good deeds than an axe does in the hand of a workman or clay in the hands of the potter. There is another hitch. He grants that God works evil deeds but denies that he acts evilly. But here he confesses that the workman cuts badly if he has a bad axe, although even that, as I said, has nothing to do with the case at hand. If God works whatever is done by ants, frogs, oxen and asses, snakes, fish and birds, fire, air and water, good angels as well as bad, mankind, whether children, young persons, or old people, upright or wicked, what is strange about what we read when we hear, 'God hardened the heart of the Pharaoh' or 'I seduced the prophet'?[557] But since these sayings are found only in a few places, they must designate some particular action. There was a large flock of pseudoprophets in Paul's time, but he does not say that God seduced them, but rather he says that a spirit of error was working in them; and then too in Ezekiel 14 the prophet who seduced the people by his prophecy is said to have been seduced by God. Therefore the figurative language here does not tell us about the general action of the first cause but rather something particular. Another absurdity that follows from such reasoning is that it makes God, who is supremely good, and the devil, who is supremely evil, work together to make the same person perform the same work; and two work

* * * * *

[556] The relationship between being and the transcendentals the good and the one was a point much discussed by scholastic philosophers. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola argued in his *De ente et uno* (1492) that being and the one are coterminous.

[557] Exod 9:12; Ezek 14:9

the same sin, the Spirit of God and the spirit of Satan, working in the sons of disbelief.[558] Luther will say that God's moving of all things is a different sort of action than that by which the spirit of Satan drives the wicked. Let us have done, then, with the universal motion of the first cause and let us deal with that working of the Spirit which is opposed to the working of Satan. That is the guideline we ought to use in interpreting 'I will harden the heart of Pharaoh' and similar statements.

You see that Luther has not yet done any of the things he promised to do. And yet, as if he had won the victory, he sings his own praises, saying 'These points are settled and certain if we believe that God is omnipotent.'[559] We believe it; but we do not acknowledge in an unqualified way that any creature is wicked. Nor do we admit that a person is wicked by the very fact that he was born. It is quite sufficient if we confess that he is excluded from the grace of God's children because of one sin which he himself did not commit or give the occasion of committing, especially if he is born of parents already cleansed of that sin by the grace of Christ, even if some trace of the ancestral transgression remains to exercise our piety and to keep us humble. Now let us see how hyperbolical Luther's language is: 'And he can no more not rage than he can not covet and seek. And he can no more not covet than not exist, since he is a creature of God, though a corrupt one.'[560] Luther errs here on two counts. First, he takes the fact that our corrupt nature is partly prone to evil to mean that it is totally swept away, as it were, into wickedness – which I have already shown to be far from true. The second is that by a sophistical trick he insists that corrupt human nature is a creature of God, although human nature in so far as it is corrupt is not a creature of God and in it God does not work evil in so far as it is evil. For even in sinning there is a certain action and substance that is naturally good, as in adultery there are bodies, looks, touches, and love.[561] But this general motion of the first cause does not resolve the difficulty we are dealing with.

We have not yet heard the thunderbolts of God. For Luther absorbed this fabrication from philosophy, which he so often detests, together with scholastic sophistry, although that is where he most often takes refuge when he is hard pressed by arguments.[562] But noticing that he has not yet suf-

* * * * *

[558] Eph 2:2
[559] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 710:1 / LW 33 176
[560] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 710:16–18 / LW 33 177
[561] Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 52–3 and n237.
[562] Cf 472–3 above.

ficiently softened that word 'harden,' he supplies another fabrication: 'To harden,' he says, 'is to make something evil. Accordingly, God does not harden in the sense of creating evil in us from scratch, as an evil innkeeper pours poison into a clean vessel, which in itself does nothing. But God,' he says, 'works evil in us (that is, through us) not by his own fault but by our vice, since by his action he seizes us, who are evil by nature, just as he works also in Satan, though he uses our evil for a good result.'[563] We may overlook that he is always mixing up the case of Satan with that of mankind – for God did not generate Satan as evil as he today generates men as evil and even wicked, if we believe Luther, and Satan was not evil through the sin of another but out of his own malice, nor does he have the seeds of virtue dwelling in him as a human being does when he is born; but if 'to harden' is 'to make something evil,' as Luther explains it, and God hardens according to the plain sense and the laws of grammar, if we exclude figures of speech (for that is what Luther does here), God made Pharaoh evil. For the sun is not said to harden the flint, which was already hard when it encountered it, but rather mud, which was soft when it came upon it.[564]

But the fellow who triumphed over us so insolently because of figures of speech takes refuge in the haven of figural language, explaining how we ought to understand it when God is said to have hardened Pharaoh. 'He hardens,' Luther says, 'that is, acting through that evil man just as he acts through all things, he used Pharaoh's evil nature to his own glory and the salvation of his people, just as a good workman does a bad work with a bad instrument.'[565] Luther objects when I try my best to use figures and inferences to defend God as just and good, but he himself uses much more far-fetched figures and comparisons to keep him from seeming good and just. For God is not only wise and a good workman, but also a good God. Now it can happen that a good man and a good workman may make an imperfect work if he is deprived of suitable tools. But who would call a man good if, with his bad tools, he knowingly made a work in which there was nothing good at all – for so Luther imagines are all the works of a person not yet justified by grace – indeed a work bad in every respect, as if someone made a vaulted roof that he knew would immediately fall down on the heads of the inhabitants or fashioned a plate from poisoned clay, especially if he had it in his power to change either the material or the tools. More appropriate to the case is the comparison of the good king who

* * * * *

---

[563] Erasmus' paraphrase of *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 710:31–711:10 / LW 33 178

[564] Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 46.

[565] Erasmus' paraphrase of *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 711:2–11 / LW 33 178

uses wicked spies to punish the wicked or defend the good. But he does not do this continually but only as often as the case requires it. And what the king does through them is not an evil work but a good one, though their intentions are not good when they carry it out. And he does not act through them as a workman through his axe, but like a master through his servant, who works himself, though the impulse comes from his lord. Up till now Luther rejected one figure of speech, but only by supplying another, like driving out one nail with another,[566] though he promised us the utterly straightforward and genuine meaning of Scripture. And even so he cannot escape. When God says 'I will harden,' the future, not the past, is meant according to the grammarians, so that one of two things is necessary: either God generated some new malice in Pharaoh or he increased that which he found in him. But is there any significant difference between inflicting a disease or intensifying it? I will ignore Pharaoh's state of mind, however. Certainly what he said and did were new actions, which God worked in him while he himself was idle and doing nothing – merely acted upon according to the comparison of the axe and the saw. Nor is it any help to Luther that God found Pharaoh's nature evil from the beginning, since he hardened that very nature by generating it, if we believe Luther, just as if a workman did a bad job with bad tools that he himself had procured.

But if Luther has recourse to the mass corrupted by sin,[567] then God worked this first sin in Adam just as he worked sin in Pharaoh, namely, as the first cause sweeping all things along by its almighty power. If he says that Adam sinned because grace was withdrawn, then the odium of the whole disaster redounds to God, who withdrew grace through no fault of Adam. Here he will take refuge in the secret will. But we deny that this is necessary, since the origin of evil can be referred to free will with more probability and in agreement with the opinion of all orthodox teachers. True, many things are laid down about the state in which our first parents were created which certainly cannot be shown from Holy Scripture. But we do read that mankind was created so as to be free to turn to evil if it wanted to and to stick to the good if it wanted to. We read that Eve was circumvented by the serpent, enticed by the beauty of the apple, and that Adam was seduced by his wife. That God arbitrarily withdrew his grace we do not read. We hold to what we read; what is made up and added to it we reject. Now if the human will does nothing, even in evil deeds, what is the

* * * * *

[566] *Adagia* I ii 4

[567] See *Hyperaspistes* 1 CWE 76 271 and n944.

meaning of Luther's oft-repeated 'Adam left to his own will'? Was the human will created evil so that someone left to it would immediately be swept away to wickedness? It is more probable, then, that someone is said to be left to his own will if God allows him to make his own choice, although he could have drawn him back as he wavered. Here there is another question: whether Adam could have resisted temptation without the addition of new grace.[568] But it is better to stick to what we have undertaken.

Here Luther brings in from the books of Kings what David said about Shimei's curse: 'The Lord has commanded him to curse David.'[569] He grants that it would be absurd to take this to mean that God commanded the curser to assail a just man with insults. And so this fellow, who claims he will explain the matter without figures of speech, in this passage once again takes refuge in figures of speech, and extraordinarily far-fetched ones at that. 'David had in mind,' he says, 'that God in his omnipotence spoke and it was done; that is, by his eternal word he does all things.'[570] This figure is very strained, and even so it is applicable not only here but to all crimes: the Lord commanded the Pharisees to hurl blasphemies at the Son of God as he was hanging on the cross; he commanded Lucifer to revolt against his maker; he commanded him to seduce Eve; he commanded that David kill Uriah and corrupt his wife by adultery; he commanded that Judas betray Christ with a kiss; he commanded that the soldiers should treat him shamefully; he commanded that pseudoapostles and heretics should harass the church of God; he commanded that savage tyrants should inflict dire punishments and even death on the disciples of Christ; he commanded that today Satan should not cease to entice mens' minds to base deeds. If interpretations like these are plausible, if they are simple, if they are in agreement with common sense, Luther has won, even if he needed a figure to do so; if they are forced, strained, and pointless, why should they cause us to depart from the decision of the church? But since this kind of language is found in only a few places in Scripture, where God uses the malice of someone or other either to correct the good or to punish the wicked or for some other good purpose, let us not confuse that general action of the first cause with such a case; let us rather adduce as evidence something particular, where the language is not general but speaks particularly about this person or that: 'I the Lord have seduced that prophet,'[571] that is, I have

* * * * *

---

[568] See 381–2 and n160 above.

[569] 2 Kings 16:10–11; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 711:10–19 / LW 33 178

[570] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 711:13–14 / LW 33 178; Luther alludes to Ps 32:9.

[571] Ezek 14:9

allowed him to deceive the people with false predictions because they deserved it. Thus he caused his adherents to wander from the right road by not recalling them with afflictions, namely those who deserved it because they scorned God when he called them back so often. In this way he sent forth a lying spirit into the mouths of the prophets. In this way he handed some over to their reprobate understanding, either so that the disease could be more easily cured after it grew worse and revealed itself or to make it quite clear to everyone that they had been abandoned according to the just judgment of God. Now when Luther confesses that God hardened Pharaoh by giving him the occasion to do so himself,[572] he is not far from our opinion. Those whose interpretation I have reported affirm the same thing: God is said to do it because he gave the occasion for it. But Luther ridicules this figurative usage when we employ it, though he himself uses it, although not in the proper place.

Now listen to the fellow's triumph. 'If we have convincingly made these points,' he says, 'we have won this case, and having excluded the figures and glosses of men, we have taken God's words literally, so that it is not necessary to excuse God or accuse him of injustice.' Let us hear, then, the literal word of God without figures or the glosses of men! '"I will harden the heart of Pharaoh,"' he says; 'he is speaking literally, as if he had said, "I will act so that the heart of Pharaoh will be hardened" or "so that by my working and doing it may be hardened." How this happens we have heard: namely, within him I will move the evil will by my general motion so that he will proceed by his own impulse and process of willing, nor will I cease to move him, nor can I do otherwise; but outwardly I will present a word and a work with which his evil impulse will clash, since he can do no other than will what is evil when I move him, evil as he is, by my almighty power.'[573] We have heard a whole volume of human words; we do not hear the word of God without figures and glosses. But instead of the glosses of the orthodox we hear the inventions of the philosophers, and for modest and accepted figures drawn from what is close at hand we hear more strained figures fetched all the way from predestination. But to whom did God say these things? To Moses. Which God, the preached or the not preached? Clearly God as preached, for the other one does not speak but silently does what he wishes. But God as preached denies that he hardens anyone but says rather that he came to save everyone,

* * * * *

[572] Luther may seem to come close to this view in *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 711:20–38 / LW 33 179.

[573] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 712:1–9 / LW 33 179–80

nor did he teach us that he hardened Judas so that he would betray his Lord, or the Pharisees so that they would crucify the unspotted lamb, in short, that all evil deeds are performed by him because the human will is merely passive, whether in a good deed or a bad one. But if Moses as a spiritual man knew that God is the first cause of everything and that all things are done by his all-powerful motion, what was strange about God's promising him that he would harden the heart of Pharaoh? But if Moses did not yet understand this secret, no more than the people to whom he exercised the office of legate in the name of God, where is that utterly straightforward speech that Luther promised and that should be judged by grammar and common sense? Did anyone before Luther ever interpret it so? Did no one ever exist in the whole world who had enough common sense to understand grammatical speech? If the people knew what Luther is teaching about the all-powerful motion, God was not saying anything strange. If they did not, they also did not understand such speech, which was anything but straightforward. But what does Luther mean when he rejoices in hyperbole, as always, and makes God say, 'nor will I cease to move him nor can I do otherwise'?[574] Couldn't God have thwarted the malice of the evil king even without grace, if he wanted to, just as he made the fire refreshing to the three young men in the Babylonian furnace?[575] He could not refrain from moving him, but he could have moved him in a different way and checked his rage. Did I say 'check'? He could have annihilated him! What hyperboles, what verbal smokescreens are thrown up for us by this person who rejects everything but the straightforward language of God.

Finally, as if he too had no confidence in these arguments, he gets out of it in another way, mentioning in passing prediction and foreknowledge. 'Thus God was quite certain and he pronounced quite certainly that Pharaoh was to be hardened, since he was quite certain that Pharaoh's will could not resist his all-powerful motion nor put aside its own malice nor accept Moses, the enemy who had been presented to him, but rather, since his bad will remained, he would necessarily become worse, harder, and more proud as long as his own course and impulse clashed with what he did not want and what he scorned through trusting in his own power, etc.'[576] What need was there to say this? If God said 'I will harden,' meaning 'I know that he will be harder than he has been up till now,' the figure would be more modest than the one introduced by Luther. But even if Pharaoh had had the

* * * * *

[574] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 711:5 / LW 33 178

[575] Dan 3:19–27. Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 50 n227.

[576] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 712:10–15 / LW 33 180

power to change his perverse and wicked will, God could have pronounced that he was to be hardened no less certainly than we can pronounce that he was in fact hardened. But at the same time Luther has forgotten himself by attributing to the human will the power to do evil, whereas before he said that the human will is merely passive, just as an axe is handled by a workman so that the axe gets no more praise if the workman uses it to build an altar than if he kills someone with it. But if the will itself also acts when it is acted upon by the motion of the first cause, why does it not do the same in a good work? – unless perhaps the impetus of the human will remains under the general motion but does not remain under the action of grace. Likewise, if all men are wicked by nature and cannot will anything but evil, how does it happen that the sight of someone else's wife motivates one man to adultery, while another man restrains himself, since neither is acted upon by the Spirit and both have the same opportunity? Again, how does it happen that one person kills people to get money, another does not even want to take money he has found? That one man spontaneously blurts out a secret, but another, even under torture, will not spit out what is to be kept secret? If wickedness flows from original sin, it is equal in everyone, except Christ and his mother, whom they also consider to be an exception. Now we have also posited an equal opportunity, and the all-powerful motion which sweeps everything along is undoubtedly common to all. There is no apparent reason here why one person is prone to one crime, another to a different one, just as the Spirit moves various people in different ways by means of various gifts. Again, this fellow is so impetuous that from the very same passage I adduced against free will, he concludes that free will can do nothing but evil.[577] But how can choice be said to be free if it is led captive only by evil? And then, what has become of Luther's doctrine that free will is an empty name, having no existence in reality? Moreover, what logic is there, I ask you, in concluding from 'God's certain foreknowledge predicted that Pharaoh was to be hardened' that therefore 'Pharaoh could not change his depraved will'? Quite the contrary, Pharaoh was impelled by preparatory grace and began to relent, and perhaps he could have come to his senses if he had embraced impelling grace. And the reason God did not add a richer grace was not nature or that general motion but the depravity of a mind contaminated by the long habit of sinning through free will. And if God had denied him impelling grace, there was no need to bring up that universal motion of the first cause like a deus ex machina,[578]

* * * * *

[577] That is, Exod 9:12; see *A Discussion* CWE 76 46.

[578] *Adagia* I i 68

but rather to adduce, as Augustine does, his earlier deserts, by which he rendered himself unworthy of the richer grace of God.[579]

And so up till now we have heard nothing from Luther which basically eliminates mankind's free will or which establishes sheer necessity or, finally, which lives up to those splendid promises: 'What a difference there is between the smokescreens of men and the thunderbolts of God.'[580] But nevertheless, just as if he had brought the matter to a happy conclusion, he proceeds to pick up the spoils of this war. To anyone who asks why God does not cease from that all-powerful motion, he replies that it is not right 'for God to cease to be God for the sake of the wicked.' This statement is more or less tolerable, though at the same time he deprives God of the power to control that motion according to his own choice. For that motion does not always sweep Satan along when he is plotting someone's destruction, nor does it always let the wicked do what they want, even when they have the opportunity. But the other point he adds is harsher, namely that it is not right 'for God to cease to be good to keep them from being worse.'[581] Does God cease to be good if he does not generate wicked men by his continual motion and sweep along their depraved wills to do evil? He would more readily be believed to be good if he either checked or changed their wicked wills. And so, since it is certain that he is supremely good, why does he not change their wills through his grace, although he can do the same thing by his all-powerful motion, whose course he controls? For he does not move like the sun or heavenly bodies, and does not operate the way fire burns, but is totally free to do what he wishes. Here Luther has no answer, unless he confesses that mankind does have some free will, and once that is posited, God is also proved to be both just and good. Instead he prefers to take refuge in the secret will of God, which he claims should not be scrutinized but only adored. But indeed, this is a more appropriate inquiry for us to pursue than those ancient questions about the consubstantiality of the Son, about the procession of the Holy Spirit from both, the birth of the Son from the same essence from which the Holy Spirit proceeds though it is not right to designate the Spirit as Son. Why didn't these questions prompt the reply that here we have a mystery which should be adored, not scrutinized? I confess that in matters concerning God we frequently come upon points where we should adore his will, not scrutinize it with human reason; but such a difficulty does not always lie in Scripture or

* * * * *

---

[579] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 23.45 PL 44 910–11

[580] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 699:22–3 / LW 33 161, referred to 446 above

[581] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 712:19–24 / LW 33 180

the subject matter but frequently in our minds, which are either unclean[582] or not sufficiently trained. And so this spell should be chanted to the uneducated, the wicked, and the thick-headed, to keep them from rushing into the inner depths of divine mysteries. But it is permissible for the pious and the well trained to examine reverently what is delivered to us in Holy Scripture. And were those who were given enough light to infer from Scripture that in three persons there is the same essence, precisely and utterly simple and undivided, were such persons so wretchedly blind about a matter much of which is so close to us that we can make some judgments about it by our good sense, a matter concerning which Holy Scripture has delivered so much to us? For I do not care much for statements like 'And if flesh and blood is offended here and murmurs, by all means let it murmur.'[583] We have already grown inured to such verbal smokescreens. It is easy to use the words 'flesh' and 'spirit,' but to distinguish between them is very difficult indeed! We are not easily persuaded that all the Doctors of the past were flesh and blood, except for Wyclif and these recent upstarts who deny mankind's free will. As for those who ask why God made Adam such that he was capable of falling, why he allowed him to fall, though a reply can be given, still it is not necessary to reply to every question. God wished to be acknowledged as supremely just and supremely good: his justice would not have shone forth if there had been no free will, that is, the ability to fall; his goodness would not have shone forth if there had been no grace to restore the fallen. The same reply can be given to those who ask why he generates everyone from the same infected mass[584] when he could have generated another race of men or created us from cleansed seed. If someone, I say, wishes to learn about these matters piously and humbly, answers like this may be given to them. But if someone who is wicked or foolishly curious or unteachable should make the same inquiries, he would deserve to hear what Luther repeatedly sings out, not only to me but to all the leaders of the church: 'He is God; he does what he wishes; adore the mystery, do not inquire into it; no rule should be laid down for him, since he himself is the rule of all things.'[585] If it is his pleasure to croak out this saying to one and all, why do holy doctors inquire about so many points in Holy Scripture and give explanations which are sometimes certain, sometimes probable, as, for example, when they ask why Christ wanted to be

* * * * *

[582] Cf *Adagia* I ix 54 and 55.
[583] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 712:27–8 / LW 33 180
[584] Cf Rom 9:21, Gal 5:9.
[585] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 712:29–34 / LW 33 180–1

born of a virgin, why of a married woman, why among the Jews, why away from home, why in a public inn, why under Augustus Caesar; why we read that only when he raised up Lazarus did he groan from his spirit and shed tears, why he allowed his friend to die, why he arrived in Bethany so late, why he commanded that the sepulchre be shown to him, why he ordered that the stone be removed, why he cried out as he did, why he ordered that he be unbound and given food? Since pious Christians occupy themselves in a wholesome way by investigating such points, why is it not permissible to do the same in other places in Scripture, as long as it is done religiously and reverently? But if the questioner is such that it is clear he would be worse if you answered him, he is to be sent packing with that saying of Paul's, 'And you, O man, who are you to answer back to God?'[586] He is God; he is incapable of not being just and good, regardless of what he says or does, even if it seems otherwise.

I think I have sufficiently shown that Luther has not fulfilled his promise, since up till now he has adduced nothing except a philosophical fabrication about the all-powerful motion, which, even if it were true, is certainly pointless here; and he has not been able to carry out the task he undertook without figures, although he declared war on all figures of speech and inferences – in fact, instead of a single figure of speech that is quite usual and not far-fetched, he has presented us with many figures, harsh and unyielding, strange and unheard-of, fetched from some other world. Moreover, I have shown that there is a manifest absurdity in the words which gave us sufficient reason to take refuge in a figure of speech which I have shown is consonant with other places in Scripture and not inconsistent with our ordinary way of speaking. And lest a figure from Erasmus be immediately rejected, I named the approved authorities, Origen, Jerome, Chrysostom, and Theophylact, who not only assert their interpretation but prove it with suitable arguments.[587] In fact, I also mentioned my authorities so that someone else who might have the desire and the ability can find a more appropriate figure of speech to remedy the absurdity of the language. What is left now is for Luther to show us with equal felicity that his fabrication is the meaning of the Holy Spirit, and to do so not with human arguments but from the drift of the passage itself, which I think is clearly the most effective kind of proof in interpreting Holy Scripture. But is there anything in Holy Scripture written so clearly that he cannot twist it to support his dogma, since he knows how to present us with such

* * * * *

[586] Rom 9:20

[587] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 46–9 and nn331 and 516 above.

interpretations as 'merit' meaning 'promises,' 'recompense' meaning 'outcome,' 'seek' meaning 'be on the road to,' 'harden' meaning 'be moved by the first cause'? But let us see the crafty skill he can display for us!

Before beginning this part, he makes a preliminary remark in his usual fashion, calling *Discussion* a 'figure-smith,'[588] as if I were reporting my opinion rather than that of the ancients or as if only *Discussion* worked with figures and inferences. But if he does not allow a figure anywhere when he handles Scripture and does not infer one thing from another, what will he end up doing, especially in places that contradict each other, or at least seem to do so? He starts out with a general condemnation of all those who use figures in explaining Holy Scripture, who he says are 'in the habit of holding the text in contempt and plucking out some word or other to twist it with figures; in this fashion *Discussion* etc.'[589] These utterly outrageous accusations, which are repeated so often in his vainglorious book, on whom do they fall? Not on *Discussion*, who conscientiously reports the opinion of the ancients, but on the most approved Doctors of the church, whom he rages against, using *Discussion* as a stalking-horse, just as long ago Julian used Augustine as a stalking-horse to make the holy Doctors of the church into Manichaeans.[590] If they snatched a word out of its context and twisted it, why accuse only *Discussion* of doing so? But Luther scorns them mightily, not to say wickedly. He scorns them, but only when they are in opposition to his dogmas. When they seem to support him, he is not reluctant to cite even Gregory[591] or some saying snatched out of some insignificant history. In the same spirit in which he abuses Jerome, he would abuse even Paul, if he dared, whenever he does not support his dogmas. But Luther prefers to indulge in tomfoolery against *Discussion* – for such mockery seems to him to be a neat trick – with the following idea in mind: 'I will make *Discussion* into a laughing-stock and a figure of fun; thus it will come about that everyone will be moved by my authority to spit on her and not deign to read her, so great is the authority of my name.' With such braggadocio does our soldier[592] make himself such promises. Is there anyone at all who is more

* * * * *

[588] Latin *tropologam*; see *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 713:1 / LW 33 181.

[589] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 713:3–8 / LW 33 180

[590] Julian was a Pelagian attacked by Augustine, who accused him of using his attack against Augustine's doctrine to convict the holy Fathers of Manichaeism; see *Contra secundam Iuliani responsionem imperfectum opus* 1.2 PL 45 1051.

[591] Probably Gregory of Rimini, a fourteenth-century Augustinian theologian whose works Luther taught briefly at Erfurt

[592] See n320 above.

careful than Origen in linking up parts of Scripture or in noting the origin, the progress, the outcome of the Spirit?

But how on earth does he argue against the figure of the ancients? 'If God,' he says, 'hardened Pharaoh's heart by putting off his punishment, what is new about saying that, since the same forbearance hardens all the wicked who abuse God's forbearance?'[593] I accept the argument, but I will immediately throw this weapon back at the one who hurled it; if the figure is inappropriate because it attributes to Pharaoh something common to all wicked persons, his fabrication about the general motion of the first cause has even less validity, because it is so far from being peculiar to Pharaoh that it is common not only to the pious and the wicked, but to frogs and crocodiles, vipers and owls, indeed to all creatures. At the same time I will pass over the fact that what he assumes is not incontrovertible: for if someone should deny that God as the first cause cooperates with secondary causes in individual things and single events, how will he go about proving, for example, that whenever a stone falls to the ground from above, it is moved by an impetus from God, not by the general force of nature alone, or that whenever a fire burns, it burns by God's impetus?[594] Accordingly, when Luther draws an inference, saying 'You see then, that this figure of yours is completely pointless in this passage because it applies generally to all whose sins are tolerated by the leniency of God,'[595] we will throw the same words back at him: You see then, Luther, that this figure of yours is completely pointless in this passage because it applies generally to all who sin and do not sin, and not only to human beings but also to asses and mules, since when they kick or do anything else they are swept along by the all-powerful motion of God. Has he not deftly examined this figure, which is not mine but belongs to the most reputable Fathers of the church?

But here our cunning craftsman provides us with another false face. Origen brings up the figure by which someone is said to harden if he gives the occasion of hardening. This applies as much to the infliction of troubles or other occasions as it does to forbearance. But it is easy to see why he gives no example except leniency, since using it as an explanation supports his side rather than the other side. These are the words of *Discussion*: 'Origen resolves the difficulty in *On First Principles* book 3 thus: admitting that God did give Pharaoh an occasion of hardening his heart, he throws the blame back onto Pharaoh, who because of his malice was made more

* * * * *

[593] Erasmus' summary of *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 713:12–24 / LW 33 181–2

[594] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 30 n110 and 50 nn226–7.

[595] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 713:19–21 / LW 33 182

obstinate by the very events which should have led him to repent.'[596] For it is clear that many are brought to their senses by afflictions, troubles, and miracles. And at the same time what Luther assumes is quite false: that all evil persons are hardened by God, either by his severity or by his leniency. Quite the contrary, even if disease or some other calamity does not cause a conversion to piety, it restrains people from an unrestrained habit of sinning, and if it does not make them fully good, nevertheless it makes them less bad. Pliny the Younger testifies to this in one of his letters, pointing out how many passionate desires are extinguished in the minds of some by sickness.[597] The same could be said of prosperous turns of events. Only those who are stubborn and arrogant towards God are hardened by both the leniency and the severity of God – which is what happened to Pharaoh. But since Pharaoh was moved by the afflictions and began to come to his senses, perhaps he would have let the people go if God had constantly pressed him by inflicting troubles on him. As it was, he was hardened in both ways, or rather in all ways, not by the all-powerful motion of the first cause, which moves even frogs and vipers, but by the occasion presented to the perverse mind of the king, just as if someone should throw resin on a fire or place some obstacle in a rapid river to make it more turbulent. This was a particular case, arising not from the universal motion but from special causes that we believe to be just even if we cannot guess exactly what they were.

But let us hear Luther explaining the aim and the language of Paul's speech. 'God did this,' he says, 'to confirm the confidence of the Jews in his promises, after they discovered that in spite of obstacles which were futilely set up against them, God had still fulfilled what he promised.'[598] So far I do not disagree with Luther. 'And for that reason,' he says, 'God so often predicted that Pharaoh would be hardened and put off his final punishment for a long time so that the occurrence of so many prodigies would give greater lustre to God's foreknowledge and power and trustworthiness.'[599] I do not have much against this either, except that the word *ut* in Holy Scripture frequently refers to an outcome rather than an intention or an aim: 'I will harden him by giving an opportunity and I know and predict it will come about that he will not let my people go.'[600] Not by giving him a mind to do something, however, he arouses him, that is, goads him by giving him an occasion,[601] as a physician might arouse a miser from his lethargy by showing him a lot of money. But when Luther adds[602] 'I will work the malice of Pharaoh and I have it in my control,'[603] if he meant 'I will work the malice' to be taken as 'I provide occasions of repenting that Pharaoh turns into greater malice,' I have nothing against it. Otherwise such language is quite harsh and intolerable to Christian ears: 'God works malice in a person.' For he is rightly said to have 'malice in his control,' if he can readily repress it whenever he wishes. God knew that Pharaoh was not frightened by the plagues, that he was not softened by the remission of the chastisement so as to let the Jews go, and he had already decided to give him over to destruction. He put off this destruction to highlight the justice of God in punishing the king and his kindness to his own people, just as if a king should use the malice of a person condemned to be executed in order to punish the guilty or as an example to others to keep them from holding the king's commands in contempt as he had done. And what was presented to him in the meantime could have been opportunities to repent if that had not been hindered by a perversity not merely naturally inherent in him but much more resultant from the habitual practice of vices. Here, then, there is no need for that all-powerful motion or for a God who works malice in Pharaoh with no figures of speech. But what sort of enthymeme is this: 'If there had been any capacity for change in Pharaoh, God would not have been able to predict certainly that he would be hardened'?[604] But this modest fellow said 'not so certainly.' Does God know some things more certainly, others less so? Luther himself, when he wants to appear more fair, grants that a person has free will in lower matters.[605] Thus a person has it within his control to kill a capon for dinner or not to do so. In this case

---

[596] *A Discussion* CWE 76 46

[597] *Epistles* 7.26.1–3

[598] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 713:25–714:1 / LW 33 182

[599] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 714:1–9 / LW 33 182–3

[600] Luther's paraphrase of Exod 3:19–20 and 7:3 is 'Pharao autem non dimittet vos ut multa signa fiant in Aegypto' ('But Pharaoh will not send you forth

* * * * *

so that there may be many signs in Egypt'), where the texts do not actually have *ut* 'in order to.' He immediately goes on to paraphrase Exod 9:16: 'in hoc ipsum excitavi te ut ostendam potentiam meam ...('my very purpose in arousing you was to show my power'), where the text does have *ut*. Luther goes on to declare that these texts express God's purpose. Erasmus (perhaps not very helpfully) remarks that *ut* in Scripture sometimes expresses result rather than purpose.

[601] The Latin *occasionem exstimulat* 'goads the occasion' seems somewhat strained.

[602] That is, 'when Luther interprets the text to mean'

[603] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 714:10 / LW 33 183

[604] Erasmus' paraphrase of *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 714:16–18 / LW 33 183

[605] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 638:4–9 / LW 33 70. See *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 193–4 and nn523–4 and 346–7 above.

cannot God predict certainly what the person will do? If God knows the future no differently than he knows the past, how can he be said to foreknow some things less certainly because a person can choose to do them or not to do them? Does Luther seem to be sober here? And once more he insists that God cannot remit the general working of his omnipotence.[606] What's that? Can God not cause the sun to stop and rivers to flow backwards to their source? When he confers grace on a wicked person and changes his will, does he not partly change his general action?

[*Paul's explanation why God rejected the Jews and received the gentiles*]

We have heard how lucidly Luther explained to us the context and the drift of Paul's speech, relying on nothing but the most straightforward and nonfigural language. Indeed, the beginning of this speech is in chapter 2; it continues in chapters 3, 4, and the chapters following thereafter. Because the Jews claimed justification for themselves from their observance of the Law (which they nevertheless did not in fact observe), so much so that they attributed less to the grace of the gospel than they ought to have done, and they did not believe that the gentiles, because they were foreign to the Law, ought to be accepted into the promise of the gospel unless they accepted the Law, and because, on the other hand, there were among the gentiles philosophers who by their judgments promised the highest good and happiness without the Mosaic law and without the grace of the gospel, Paul acts so as to deprive both groups of their foolish confidence and to show both that salvation is no longer gained by observing the Law and that salvation does not at all require the ceremonial observances of the Law, to which the Jews attributed more than to the spiritual commandments of the Law, which were not eliminated but clarified by the gospel. Then he showed that neither group is justified but that all alike need the grace of the gospel, which is offered to everyone, not because of preceding merits but because of the free promise of God; that whoever trusted in that promise, whichever group he came from, would be saved, declaring that the mistakes of their previous lives would not be a hindrance if they repented and that the Law would do the Jews no good unless they repented and acknowledged the grace of the gospel. The promise was made to the Jews, but it would do them no good if they did not believe in the gospel. And they were not to be considered the descendants of Abraham if they did not respond to the faith of Abraham. For now the Jews were rejecting the gospel out of zeal

* * * * *

[606] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 714:20–37 / LW 33 183–4

for the Old Law, and the uncircumcised gentiles suddenly became the true sons of Abraham through faith. Paul discusses these points variously for several chapters. Furthermore, lest the gentiles should distrust the promises because they themselves were foreign to the Law and the prophets, especially since they saw the Jews clinging so tenaciously to the Law, he takes away from both groups any confidence in works and makes both of them equal in the grace of the gospel through faith; not that it is surprising that most of the Jews rejected the gospel, which was promised specifically to them, since they refused to believe, and no one is capable of grace unless he believes; he teaches that God foreknew that the people of Israel would be found lacking by the gospel and that their failure would be the occasion of opening the doors to the gentiles, however foreign they were to the Law and the prophets; for the sum and substance of this benefit depends on the generosity of God and the faith of mankind.

And lest the Jews should complain because God is rejecting his own people, whom he had chosen, nursed with so many promises, and honoured with so many splendid titles, and is accepting in their place the unclean, idolatrous gentiles, whose morals were utterly filthy, Paul shows that God foreknows everything that is to come and that he bestows honour and shame not by nobility of birth but by future merits, just as he honoured Abraham's son Isaac with the inheritance of the promise, but drove Ishmael, who was born of the same father, out of the house: and from Isaac was born a people dear to God; from Ishmael, the profane nations. Then again, from the same father and the same mother, and in the same birth, Jacob and Esau were born: but he made Jacob, whose piety he foreknew, the patriarch of the twelve tribes; but Esau he made the head of barbarous gentiles. Why was honour decreed for some and not for others? Because God foreknew and predicted that for just reasons it would come about that the Jews would be excluded from the grace of the gospel and that the gentiles would be adopted into this honour, so that towards the Jews he displayed examples of his severity, as he did to Pharaoh, and towards the gentiles he manifested examples of his goodness, as he did towards the sons of Israel by freeing them from slavery in Egypt. He called the gentiles to the gospel; he did not compel them by force. Nor did he repel the Jews by force, but because they stubbornly resisted the gospel even after they had experienced so many benefits and seen so many miracles and because they were worthy of ruin as vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, he held them up to everyone as a horrible example so that all could see how dangerous it is to spurn the grace of God when he offers himself to us. And so the outcome was unexpected: that a people so special and beloved of God should be rejected so as to become, as they still are today, the most abject of

LB X 1412C

mortals; and that the gentiles, who were either so wicked as to deserve that God should cast them into hell or so barbarous that they hardly seemed to be human beings, should be suddenly received into the number of God's sons. But God used the stubbornness of the Jews for his own glory and the salvation of the gentiles, and he used the faith of the gentiles to declare his kindness to all who believe in the gospel. In both cases he showed most firm trustworthiness in keeping his promises. For both results were predicted by the prophets, both that the Jews should be condemned and that the grace of the gospel should go over to the gentiles.

Here there is not yet any of the compulsion or necessity that Luther imagines. The Jews were cut from the olive tree, as Paul teaches soon afterwards in chapter 11, and the gentiles from the wild olive tree were grafted into the cultivated olive tree. What was the reason? Because of belief and the lack of belief. The gentiles did not fail to respond to the grace of the gospel which was offered to them but rather acknowledged their wickedness and embraced God's goodness; the Jews, on the other hand, invited to repent by even greater grace, were more hardened against the gospel. Here you see there is room for free will, which makes itself available to impelling grace if it wishes to do so and accepts sanctifying grace, and turns away if it wishes to and renders the person unworthy of a greater grace. Hence Paul not only shows the reasons I spoke of, saying 'The branches were broken off because of lack of belief, but you stand by faith,' but also shows that it is in our power to depart from grace or to turn to the grace that is offered: 'Do not have a high opinion of yourselves, but be apprehensive; otherwise you too will be cut off; but they also, if they do not persist in their disbelief, will be grafted on.'[607] If someone says, 'Do not have too high an opinion of yourselves,' isn't he showing how a person can depart from grace? – namely by attributing to himself what God freely gave him. Luther, however, will attribute this arrogance to God's withdrawal of his grace; but the orthodox, who have a better understanding of God's goodness and justice, attribute it to free will. Naturally, I do not deny that God sometimes takes away his grace from the pious for a while so that after their fall they may stand more firmly. But he does this to one person or another for special reasons, and it is not relevant to a general discussion. But if someone says that God gives grace to an undeserving person for no other reason than that it pleases him to do so, although he does not confirm God's justice, still he emphasizes his goodness. But if someone proclaims that God spontaneously withdraws

* * * * *

[607] Rom 11:20–3

from a person what he had freely given him, so that the person perishes through no fault of his own, he does not speak with sufficient piety about God's inestimable goodness. Once more, at the end of chapter nine[608] of this epistle, Paul teaches the same thing somewhat more clearly. 'Therefore,' he says, 'what shall we say? that the gentiles who did not seek for righteousness found righteousness, but a righteousness that comes from faith; Israel by seeking the law of righteousness did not achieve the law of righteousness. Why? Because it was not righteousness from faith but from works.'[609] You see that the Jews were not rejected without cause but clearly because of their confidence in the works of the Law, which puffed them up so that they resisted the grace of the gospel, and that those saved from among the gentiles were not saved without cause but rather because of their straightforward faith. 'But faith,' he will say, 'is a gift of God and is not within our power.' I grant it, if you mean faith which justifies through grace. But just as there is a kind of knowledge that prepares for the light of faith, so too there is a sort of human faith that prepares a person for justifying faith. And just as there are levels of righteousness, so too there are levels of gifts, until we come to what is merely natural. And even this has a grace of its own, since the author of nature is God, so that Augustine had no reason to fear that the beginning of grace might be said to arise from mankind.[610] Finally, even justifying grace is in a person's control in such a way that, if he wishes, he can embrace impelling grace, which is denied to no one – I am speaking in general – or, if he wishes, he can turn away from it.

Having discussed these points concerning Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Paul imagines some lofty Jew or arrogant gentile seizing on them to indict God of the crime of injustice: 'Is God, then, unjust, acting like a tyrant, doing whatever he takes a mind to do?' Paul finds this statement abominable, saying: 'Far from it.' Once more taking the role of someone arguing on the other side, he adds: 'He said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have had mercy and I will take pity on whom I will take pity." Therefore it depends not on what you wish or how you run but on the mercy of God. Therefore Scripture says to Pharaoh, "because I have raised you up for this very purpose, to display my power in you and to spread my fame over the whole earth." Therefore he has mercy as he wishes and

* * * * *

[608] The Froben 1527 edition and LB have *undecimi* 'eleventh,' an error for *noni* 'ninth.' The error probably arose from the transposition of IX.

[609] Rom 9:30–2

[610] *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 2.3–6 PL 44 961–4 and *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 22.24 PL 44 909–10

he hardens as he wishes.' Some of the ancients attribute this whole speech not to Paul but to someone speaking against him, who he imagines drawing conclusions from Scripture wrongly understood: 'Why does he still complain? Who can resist his will?'[611] This statement is close to what Luther says: he both takes away all merit from those who do good and at the same time frees evildoers from blame, ascribing the grace of all good deeds to God's will and transferring to God the blame for evil deeds, except that he invented an utterly wicked human nature and some all-powerful motion of God, so as not to be forced to attribute wrongdoing to God. Paul is not yet resolving the difficulty, however, but rebukes unteachable arrogance, just as if a master should reply to a disobedient servant who is arguing about the commands of his lord: 'What business is it of yours why I command it? It should be enough for you that such is my pleasure; it is not your place to judge my decisions.' But if the lord were questioned by his servant humbly and reverently, he would not hesitate to give the reason for his decision. And so those expressions 'And you, O man, who are you to answer back to God?' and 'Does the clay say to the potter, etc.'[612] do not entirely cut a person off from the knowledge of the problem posed but from an over-curious and wicked investigation of it. For afterwards Paul resolves the difficulty, in so far as is proper for a mere man. For this question has some outer reaches where human reason should yield to the majesty of God – as, for example, if someone should ask why God allowed so many thousands to perish with no recourse while he saved many through the gospel, and why before the gospel he came to the aid of only the Jewish nation by means of the Law (for the Law was not preached throughout the whole world as the gospel was), and likewise why some infants perish without the font of regeneration[613] while others are saved – and that through no fault of their parents – no one, I think, would have any answer, except that whatever God does or permits is always done according to a judgment that is just indeed, but sometimes unknown to us, as Augustine writes.[614] But if someone does not believe me when I say that this whole speech is directed not at teaching the necessity which Luther proposes but rather at putting down over-curious and arrogant inquisition, let him read the commentaries of Jerome, Chrysostom, and Theophylact. But I must say more about this later.[615]

* * * * *

---

[611] Rom 9:14–19

[612] Rom 9:20

[613] That is, baptism; cf Titus 3:5.

[614] See n518 above.

[615] See nn516 and 587 above; 500–2 below.

[Does divine foreknowledge impose necessity?]
In the meantime I will follow the course of Luther's argumentation – if in fact someone can be said to be arguing when he makes and unmakes law according to his own whim[616] and when he ridicules the authority of everyone and calls his own dreams the thunderbolts of God. With marvellous distaste he ridicules *Discussion* as if she were caught up in the intricacies of the question, twisting herself first one way and then another. 'At one time,' he says, 'she says there is a necessity of consequence but not of the consequent; at another, she says it is the ordained or signified will that can be resisted, while the will at God's free pleasure[617] cannot. At another time, the passages cited from Paul do not contradict each other and are not speaking about salvation. At another, the foreknowledge of God presupposes necessity; at another, it does not. At another time, prevenient grace enables the will to act; grace accompanies the resulting action and gives it a happy outcome. At one time, the primary cause does everything; at another, it acts through secondary causes, remaining itself at rest.'[618] I omit the other things he piles up. What fun this tyrant has! How fond of himself he always is! How averse he always is to what others say! How sure he is that everyone will take whatever he says as if it were oracular!

First of all, I take exception to the lies he has mixed in here, namely that *Discussion* said the first cause does everything and, on the other hand, contradicted herself by saying that everything is done through secondary causes, while the first cause remains at rest. This is what *Discussion* says: 'I will not discuss here whether God, who is indisputably the primary and highest cause of everything that is done, brings about certain events through secondary causes in such a way that he himself at the same time does nothing, or whether he does all things in such a way that the secondary causes merely cooperate with the principal cause, but are otherwise not necessary. It is certainly beyond doubt that God, if he wishes, can reverse the natural effect of all secondary causes. For example, he can cause fire to make things cold and wet, etc.'[619] From these words, even if I added nothing, it is quite clear that Luther's charge is false. If in fire a secondary cause acts together with the first cause, why should it be absurd that in mankind the

* * * * *

[616] Latin *arbitratu*, playing on *liberum arbitrium* 'free choice, free will'
[617] Latin *voluntas placiti*. The fuller expression, *voluntas dei beneplaciti*, is equivalent to 'God's absolute will.' See Oberman *Harvest* 476.
[618] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 715:1–7 / LW 33 184–5, and see *A Discussion* CWE 76 46–53.
[619] *A Discussion* CWE 76 50

will should act together with the action of grace? But sharp-witted Luther is accustomed to drawing the inference 'the will does everything, therefore it acts alone.' But where did I say that foreknowledge presupposes necessity? Quite the contrary, this is what I refute, whereas Luther shamelessly and repeatedly brings it up and hammers it home. Why should I not be permitted to make the question clearer by using distinctions propounded by orthodox writers concerning the signified will and the efficacious will, immutable necessity and inevitable necessity, concerning preparatory or impelling grace, operating and cooperating grace, sufficient, progressive, and performative grace, and (if I chose to add this) natural or common grace, since Luther himself presents us with so many distinctions that are unheard-of (or at least presented in unheard-of language) concerning God as preached or not preached, God crucified and God dwelling in inaccessible light, the divine will which is to be examined and that which is to be adored, the motion of Almighty God and the motion of Satan in the same evil work, the necessity of immutability and that of coercion, the human will which is inactive and merely passive in both good and evil works, and the will which is active in good and evil works? And these dreams of his he calls God's thunderbolts, while he makes fun of ideas from reputable authors. And in order to look quite witty, he compares *Discussion* to a child who closes his eyes so as not to see someone and then imagines no one can see him.[620] How deftly said! Where is his claque of admirers? I almost let some of their names slip. Is there a more fitting target for this joke than Luther, who thinks he has blinded the whole world, when in fact everyone knows that he has not put forth anything either good or bad that he did not garner from the written works of the ancients? I exclude his hyperboles and certain monstrosities of quasi-prophetic language in which he tries to make what is old seem new, so much so that he seems to bear a grudge against Wyclifs and even against Waldos and Huses.[621] And at the same time as he is sending up such smokescreens before the eyes of his readers, he intones such splendid phrases as 'the thunderbolts of God,' 'the brightest flashes of lightning,' 'truth stands unconquered.' For such lightning and thunderbolts, seek out some foreigner, Luther; they are all too familiar to us.

He reminds us of what *Discussion* brought up in passing concerning necessity of the consequent and necessity of consequence. He boasts that he

* * * * *

[620] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 715:11–15 / LW 33 185

[621] On Wyclif see *A Discussion* CWE 76 12 n35; on Hus see *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 133 n199; Peter Waldo or Valdès was the late-twelfth-century founder of the Waldensian heretical sect.

has felicitously dispatched this notion by logical consequence, whereas he has deliberately obscured the matter in a tangled confusion of words. For I distinguished a necessary conclusion from a contingent proposition. Thus, according to the character of the first I said that one proposition necessarily follows from another: if it is true that 'God foreknows that Judas will betray the Lord,' it necessarily follows that 'Judas will betray the Lord.' But according to the second way it does not follow that 'Judas will necessarily betray the Lord,' for Judas could have turned his will in another direction. For necessity of the consequent applies when what happens could not happen otherwise. Necessity of consequence applies even to false propositions, such as 'If man is a stone, he does not feel,' but necessity of the consequent is very far from applying here. If it did, the proposition 'Man does not feel' would be necessary – which is impossible.[622] This, I think, is sufficiently straightforward. Now see the smokescreen put up by Luther, who claims that he intends to explain the matter in a down-to-earth way.[623] This is how he explains necessity of consequence: 'If God wills something, it is necessary that it happen, but it is not necessary that what happens should exist. For only God exists necessarily; it is possible for everything else not to exist, if God so wills. Thus they say that an action of God is necessary if he wills it, but the thing done is not itself necessary. But what do they accomplish by this ludicrous word-play of theirs? Just this: the thing done is not necessary, that is, does not have a necessary essence. This is no more than to teach that the thing done is not God himself. In spite of that, it still follows that everything happens necessarily if the action of God is necessary or if there is a necessity of consequence, however true it may be that the thing done does not exist necessarily, that is, is not God, and does not have a necessary essence.'[624] This is what he says. What could be more convoluted than this explanation? First he brings up the example of the creation of someone, where the will of the person created does nothing, whereas we are talking about something that the will has the inherent power to do or not to do, as, for example, if someone has a piece of bread in his hand

---

[622] A paraphrase of *A Discussion* CWE 76 51–2

[623] *Adagia* I i 37

[624] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 617:3–12 / LW 33 40. Erasmus here interrupts his serial progression through Luther's book to jump back to a much earlier passage of Luther on conditional necessity. McSorley (320–2) believes that this exchange about God's foreknowledge of Judas' betrayal shows that Luther did not truly understand the distinction between necessity of the consequent and necessity of the consequence. See *A Discussion* CWE 76 52 and n234.

and chooses to dip it in the sauce served up with it, it becomes a juicy morsel; if he does not, it will not become such. Then does the person who dips it do so necessarily or rather contingently, since he had the power to change his choice? Luther teaches that he dips it necessarily. How so? Because God foreknew that he would dip it, that is, that he would make that choice and not change it, and if he changed it, God would foreknow what the final choice would be. Where, then, is that human free will in lower matters which Luther concedes in this book?[625] Is sheer necessity consistent with free will? No more than fire and water. But if I dip the bread in the sauce contingently, in spite of either the foreknowledge or the will of God, it also follows that Judas betrayed the Lord contingently, not necessarily. Thus the example given by Luther is not relevant to the matter at hand. And yet he accommodates to this example his definition of 'contingent.' 'Something is done contingently,' he says, 'if it is done by a contingent and mutable will. A work is contingent if it happens to us contingently and by chance, as it were, with no foreknowledge of it on our part.'[626] Such, indeed, is the creation of the world, as far as I am concerned. But what does this have to do with human actions, which is what we are talking about? 'In God there is no mutable will; therefore every action of God is necessary, though his works are contingent, if he so wishes.'[627] I grant that God's will and foreknowledge are God himself, but nevertheless that God directs his foreknowledge and will to things outside himself does not preclude those things from being contingent by their own nature. Now since God's will is the same when it causes something to be made and when it wills what has been made, a man who has been made is no less necessarily a man, if God wishes him to be so, than is the action by which God created him. But to us such things are contingent because we do not know whether God wishes to make an ass out of a man. Thus the sun rises necessarily if you consider the course of nature; if you consider God's will as it is unknown to us, it rises contingently because it could happen that it not rise, if God so wished.[628] But we do not measure what is contingent or necessary by our knowledge or ignorance but rather by the nature of the thing itself.

* * * * *

---

[625] See *Hyperaspistes* 1 CWE 76 193 n523.

[626] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 616:7–11 / LW 33 38

[627] This seems to be Erasmus' summary of *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 616:13–617:13 / LW 33 39–40.

[628] This statement is congruent with the emphasis of the scholastic *via moderna* on God's freedom to have or not to have created the world, which in that sense is contingent. See n624 above.

For God would exist none the less necessarily if men doubted whether or not there is a God. Nor is anything said to be contingent simply because I am uncertain whether or not it will happen, but rather because it is in the nature of the thing that it can happen or not happen, as in things which depend on human choice, to come back to the matter at hand.[629] Accordingly, if you consider God, all things that are not God were contingently created. But things that depend on human choice are contingent twice over: first, because they are done by a changeable will and second, because by the will of God they could happen otherwise. But our lack of foreknowledge has nothing to do with the nature of the contingent. We know what happens contingently, once it has happened, with unchangeable certitude, but it does not cease to have happened contingently, even though it clearly has a necessity of immutability so far as we are concerned: what has once been done cannot become not done. And just as the proposition 'Peter will eat dinner tomorrow,' if we assume he will do so, is contingently true, so too if he did have dinner, the proposition 'Peter ate dinner yesterday' will be contingently true on the day after tomorrow, and my knowledge or uncertainty does not change the nature of the case, which resides in the power of a human being. It is quite a different matter when Luther says that in all persons God does both good and evil, and that a person is not active but totally passive, and that therefore whatever is good or evil happens necessarily. But this is to use as a proof something which needs to be proven, since it is the subject of the controversy. But I hardly know whether Luther thinks 'to happen fortuitously or by chance' is the same as 'to happen contingently.' Something happens fortuitously or by chance if it occurs without our expecting it and without any effort on our part. The contingent, which Aristotle calls *endechomenon*, encompasses the possibility of being or not being, so that the contingent is not always identical with the possible, which is called δυνατόν. For there are three kinds of causes which determine necessity or contingency; there is human free will, there are natural causes in things inanimate or lacking reason, and there is the highest cause, God. Nothing prevents one and the same thing from being both necessary and contingent if it is considered with respect to different causes. For example, the motions of the heavenly bodies, the ebb and flow of the tides, that fire burns, that heavy things fall down – these things happen necessarily considered in relation to us because they arise from causes which we cannot hinder; if you consider them in relation to God, they are contingent because

* * * * *

[629] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 52 n234; *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 158–60 and nn343–8.

he controls the power of secondary causes. But what depends on the human will is simply contingent both to us and to God. For he knows and wills in accord with the nature of the thing: necessarily if it is necessary, contingently if it is contingent. But soon there will be an opportunity to say more about such matters.

And so after Luther has made it fully clear that created things are not God, although we are concerned with human actions, he triumphs in these words: 'Therefore the proposition that everything happens by necessity stands and remains invincible. Nor is there any obscurity or ambiguity here. In Isaiah God says: "My counsel shall stand and my will shall be done." What schoolboy does not understand the meaning of such words as "counsel," "will," "shall be done," "will stand"?'[630] Certainly we have heard a marvellous triumph here! If any schoolboy understands these words of Isaiah, how did it happen that so many theologians saw nothing here? He will say, 'Luther was not among them.' Then let us examine the passage. Is it preceded or followed by anything that eliminates human free will? The passage speaks about the outcome of events, about the frustration of human plans and of the promises of the pseudoprophets, and about the capture of Babylon. Hence in one passage Luther errs twice over: first, he applies the language of Scripture irrelevantly and second, he makes a general statement out of a particular one. And yet, a little while ago, he taught that it is absurd for interpreters to pluck out some word or other and twist it to their own meaning, paying no attention to what is treated in the passage, with whom it deals, whence the language arises, what is the drift of the passage.[631] And so if we grant Luther that God formed that evil will in Judas and drove him to his crime, then he has shown at any rate that Judas necessarily betrayed the Lord (in so far, at least, as the act pertains to the traitor), but he has no more proved the necessity of the action from God's foreknowledge than from my knowledge of the deed now that it is done. For God knows the past no differently than he foresees the future; indeed, for him there is no past or future, but rather he sees all things most perfectly as present in one undivided view, just as he wills all things with one and the same act of his will. After some vehement assertions, Luther throws it up to me that I am forced by my conscience to profess the same thing as he does. Why? 'If God is not deceived in what he foreknows, then it is necessary that the things foreknown

* * * * *

[630] Isa 46:10; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 617:19–22 / LW 33 40–1

[631] Perhaps Erasmus is alluding to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 708:19–709:3 / LW 33 174–5.

should happen. Otherwise who could believe his promises?'[632] However drunk she may have been, *Discussion* made no such pronouncement, but rather for the sake of argument she put it as follows: 'In the human sphere, too, we can posit a certain necessity, which nevertheless does not exclude the freedom of our will. God foresaw (and what he foresaw he in some sense willed) that Judas would betray the Lord. Therefore, if we regard God's infallible foreknowledge and immutable will, it was necessarily going to come about that Judas would betray the Lord. Yet Judas could have changed his will or certainly was able not to take upon himself an evil volition. You will ask, what if he had? God's foreknowledge would not have been false, nor would his will have been impeded, since he would have foreknown and willed that Judas was going to change his will.'[633] This is what was expressed, as I said, for the sake of argument. That this is so is indicated by these words of *Discussion*: 'We can posit a certain necessity.' How does this amount to my saying what Luther here asserts? Indeed, I assert the opposite. And yet in what follows I explain even what I say about necessity by distinguishing necessity of the consequent from necessity of consequence.

From human foreknowledge we fashion an argument about God's foreknowledge. An astronomer foreknows with certainty that there will be an eclipse, but nevertheless his foreknowledge does not force the sun to coincide with the moon. And human knowledge about the past can be infallible, as, for example, I know for certain that Peter dined the day before yesterday, but that is no reason to think he did so necessarily. In this way God's foreknowledge does not prevent the will from choosing, no more than does his knowledge of things past. Hence it is foolishness to say that God's credibility in keeping his promises would collapse unless what he predicts happens necessarily. We profess that everything predicted by God or by a prophet of God inspired by the Spirit will most certainly happen, but there is no need to say it will happen necessarily. God predicts that some things will happen absolutely, as when he predicted he would come in judgment. No human being can keep it from happening. He promises or threatens some things conditionally: 'If you keep the commandments, you will be saved; if you scorn them, you will go to hell.' The condition resides partly in us; the infallible outcome depends on God alone. I have revealed one of Luther's false faces; I will reveal another. Once again, however long and hard *Discussion* struggles against it, she teaches the same

* * * * *

[632] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 619:1–3 / LW 33 42.

[633] *A Discussion* CWE 76 51–2

thing as Luther. To make this more convincing, he recites her very words: 'The problem of God's will and predestination is more difficult, for God wills the same things he foreknows. And this is what Paul adds: "Who resists his will?"[634] For if there were a king who could carry out whatever he wished, and no one could resist him, he would be said to do whatever he wished. Just so, since God's will is the principal cause of everything that happens, it does seem to impose necessity on our will.'[635] This is what she says. And Luther says, 'At last we thank God for some sound sense in *Discussion*.'[636] Once more Luther does not notice that *Discussion* is arguing, not making pronouncements. First of all, he cleverly omits that when *Discussion* makes this argument she says, 'For God must in some sense will whatever he knows is going to happen and has it in his power to prevent it but does not do so.'[637] These words he omits, and not without reason, since they clearly reject the opinion that he pretends I profess. 'He wills it in some sense.' What does this mean? It means that whoever allows something to happen which he has the power to prevent is said to will it. And she infers: 'Just so he seems to impose.' What does 'just so' mean if not 'in the manner of ordinary speech,' which says that a person does something if he is able to prevent it but does not do so? – as for example, when someone is said to have killed a person whom he did not save though he was able to do so? What does 'seems to impose' imply? That to some it might seem so, but it is not true. Let Luther go on now and thank God for the sound opinion of *Discussion*.

Now the words that Luther attributes to Paul the ancients attribute to a wicked disputant who sometimes cites the words of Scripture as Satan did in the Gospel when he was tempting the Lord.[638] And still it would not make a great deal of difference even if these words were attributed to the Apostle, who only cited them and argued from them. For it is his habit to be changeable and slippery in handling questions, so that learned men often confess that it is very difficult to notice where he begins a point and where he leaves off – which is what usually happens to someone who is being led through the chambers of a royal palace – a comparison which Jerome applies specifically to this passage, testifying that he wishes to

* * * * *

[634] Rom 9:19, cited in *A Discussion* CWE 76 48

[635] *A Discussion* CWE 76 48–9

[636] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 716:17–24 / LW 33 186

[637] *A Discussion* CWE 76 48

[638] Rom 9:15–18; Matt 4:6; see nn516–17, 587 above.

conduct himself circumspectly and reverently in the inner sanctum of the king.[639] Would that Luther had also done so from time to time and had not pronounced everything as if he were delivering an oracle. Certainly these are the words of wicked men: 'Therefore why does God complain, if he hardens whomever he wishes and has mercy on whomever he wishes?' To them Paul replies: 'You, O man, who are you to answer back to God?'[640] He does not solve the problem but rather checks the wicked accusation that God is unjust and does everything according to his own whim. Here Luther holds me in contempt because I make pronouncements out of my own head, without Scripture, without miracles; indeed I corrupt the very clearest words of God.[641] I did not profess that I would perform miracles, and I do not make pronouncements out of my own head, since I offer the authority of Chrysostom and Theophylact,[642] nor do I make them without Scripture, unless he does not consider scriptural the many places I cite that very clearly refute Luther's necessity. But Luther will reject the authority of the orthodox Fathers. I will let him, as long as he himself in turn lets me reject the interpretations he spins out of his own head contrary to the opinion of all the ancients, whenever it suits him in promoting his cause. Chrysostom, and together with him the most reputable ancient doctors, teach that these are the words of someone putting down wicked murmuring against God, not solving the problem, which he does in the words that follow: 'But if God, wishing to show his anger and to make his power known, etc.'[643] Augustine does not entirely disagree, when he says: 'By not solving he somehow solves, also indicating where the true solution begins.'[644] Luther vigorously denies this, asserting that these are quite clearly the words of someone professing sheer and absolute necessity in all things and that no meaning is to be sought out here except that God so willed it. 'What is the point of this question,' he says, 'about the will of God? Isn't it this: that it imposes necessity on our will?'[645] To reply in one word, no! But earlier I have already settled what is being dealt with

* * * * *

[639] In the only place Jerome (or pseudo-Jerome) discusses this passage at length (Ep 120.10 CSEL 55 500–6) he does not apply this comparison. It is to be found in Origen *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos* 7.16 PG 14 1143–4.

[640] Rom 9:15–20

[641] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 716:27–9 / LW 33 186.

[642] See n587 above.

[643] Rom 9:22; see nn516 and 587 above.

[644] Erasmus paraphrases *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* 2.7.15 CSEL 60 475:21.

[645] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 716:31–3 / LW 33 186. Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 48–9.

here,[646] and it is superfluous to repeat myself. Nevertheless, in the course of showing that neither the rejection of the Jews nor the acceptance of the gentiles happened fortuitously but were determined long ago and predicted by the prophets, the Apostle brought up the example of Isaac and Ishmael, and likewise of Jacob and Esau, so that the Jews would see that fleshly descent had nothing to do with the grace of the gospel but rather faith, which constitutes a spiritual relationship. From this consideration the question of the murmuring of the wicked arises by the by, as it were. If what I am saying is not present in the books of the most reputable Doctors of the church, then Luther is free to cry out that I have spun this fabrication out of my own head. But if he rejects whatever I present and I in turn have the same right to reject whatever he presents, then the play is over. But let us imagine that the words 'He has mercy on whomever he wishes and he hardens whomever he wishes'[647] are attributed to the person of Paul. Whoever has mercy on someone who does not deserve it does no injury to those whose punishment is not remitted, so that in this passage God's justice is in no danger. Thus, for example, when the calf was adored, everyone shared in the crime, but only a fixed number were killed and the rest were spared.[648] We cannot give any reason for this. But still there can be no doubt that God had good reasons to do it. And if he had no other reason than his own good pleasure, no one has any grounds to complain and some have reason to be thankful.

Concerning Pharaoh various replies have been given. Origen solves the problem in another way. 'It does not depend on who wills or runs but on the mercy of God': that is, a person wishes in vain, he labours in vain, unless grace comes to his assistance, according to the saying 'Unless the Lord guards the city, those who guard it watch in vain,' or the saying of the Apostle, 'It is not the one who plants something or waters it but God who makes it grow.' Finally, he concludes his discussion as follows: 'It is in our control to turn towards salvation or to turn away from it.'[649] But how the pious are rewarded or the wicked destroyed is for God alone to decide. Therefore if a wicked person murmurs about why God hardened the Pharaoh, why he rejected his chosen people, he will reply: 'It is not

* * * * *

[646] *A Discussion* CWE 76 46–54. The argument here is about what Paul meant in Rom 9:15–20.

[647] Rom 9:18

[648] Exod 32:26–35

[649] Origen cites Rom 9:16, Ps 126:1, and 1 Cor 3:7; see his *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos* 79–99 PG 14 1144C–1147B.

your place to inquire how I punish the wicked.' Again, if they murmur about why he rejects his own and accepts the worshippers of demons, who deserve all manner of punishment, he will reply: 'I am just when I punish the wicked, merciful when I call upon the unworthy to repent.' 'You say, then, "Why does God still complain? Who resists his will?"[650] Do you see,' says Luther, 'the role he assumes?' I see it. So what? 'When they hear,' he says, 'that the will of God imposes necessity on us, they murmur blasphemously and say, "Why does he still complain?" that is, why does God insist, urge, demand, complain as he does? etc.'[651] And he carries on with sheer verbiage because he has no case. Quite the contrary, because Paul saw that what he brought up for a different reason might be seized upon by the wicked to excuse their wickedness, he anticipates them by reporting their speech, and he does not immediately solve this very difficult problem but rather he first checks their arrogance and prepares their minds so that the pious, at least, will have something they can say in reply to such murmurs. And if someone does not have a ready reply to such arguments, Paul points out a weapon that can immediately thwart such wicked temerity: 'Does the clay say to the potter?'[652] In this way Julius II is said to have replied to the ambassador of Louis XII, who demanded to know why he had thrown a French cardinal into prison. 'Because he is my cardinal. It is my pleasure, and it is not for the king to ask me the reasons for how I treat my cardinals.' If the king had inquired reverently, perhaps Julius would have been willing to give him the reasons. As it was, he wished only to put down a hostile and irreverent protest. Paul is doing the same thing in this passage.

Luther goes on prattling: 'If Paul had not explained this problem and had not laid it down as a certainty that God's foreknowledge imposes necessity on us, why was there any need to bring in those who murmur that his will cannot be resisted? For who would murmur or be indignant if he did not think this necessity was being laid down?'[653] I have already shown that God's foreknowledge and will do not always impose necessity on the human will, although in some matters the occurrence imposes a necessity of inevitability, as the scholastics say. God predetermined that everyone must die; no one can avoid it, and even so the way in which each person will die is not within our control. Then again, God wills differently when he does so absolutely than when he wills conditionally. For example, it is

* * * * *

---

[650] Rom 9:19

[651] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 717:2–5 / LW 33 187

[652] Rom 9:20–1

[653] See n651 above.

said to Hezekiah, 'You will die and you will not live,' but Hezekiah nevertheless lived; for these words were a threat calling him to pray and do penance.[654] 'There are three days still and Nineveh will be overthrown,' but it was not promptly overthrown.[655] But to answer Luther tit for tat,[656] why is it that when we are talking, if something comes up that we suspect may be wrongly interpreted, we interject an explanation, shutting the mouths of those who might distort what we have said? Up till now Luther has presented us with nothing but most vehement assertions, pounding home that Scripture is very clear and that there is no one who does not know what 'resist' or 'will' or 'God' means: 'Here let countless thousands of the most approved Doctors be blind; let them pretend that Scripture is not quite clear; let them be afraid of a difficult question. We have very clear words, which read as follows: "He has mercy on whomever he wishes and he hardens whomever he wishes."'[657] He is also not ashamed to repeat over and over what has been refuted even by schoolboys: 'If God foreknows something, it necessarily happens, if we presume that God neither errs nor is deceived.'[658] We have here a magnificent cockadoodledoo and nothing more. But why are you telling me about contraries and contradictories? If God, who also sees the future just as if it were the past, is not deceived, does it follow that mankind never acts as a result of its own changeable will? I see a servant sitting down. Was he therefore not free to stand up if he had wished to do so?[659] When will Luther bring out these thunderbolts of God? Up till now we have heard only the words of a braggart.

We do not disagree that Paul assumes the role of someone else. We agree that the words 'Why does he still complain? Who resists his will?'[660] are the murmuring of some wicked person. But Luther agrees neither with me nor with any of the ancient interpreters when he says that the words spoken by the wicked are correct. They would be rightly said if a person had no more power to do either good or evil than an axe in the hand of a workman or clay in the hand of a potter, but rather by sheer necessity he were purely passive to God working in him. If this were true and if this

* * * * *

[654] 4 Kings 20:1–6; Isa 38:1–6

[655] Jonah 3; Erasmus quotes 3:4. Actually the Ninevites were given forty days, but 3:3 says that it took three days to walk through the city.

[656] See n254 above.

[657] Rom 9:18

[658] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 717:18–25 / LW 33 187–8

[659] Boethius *Consolation of Philosophy* 5 prose 3

[660] Rom 9:19

were what they understood from Paul's words, as Luther claims, would they not be right to say '"Why does God still complain" about us, since we are not at all active but merely passive and since we are damned or saved according to his will, no matter what we deserve? He issued so many laws, though he knows they contain nothing with which we can comply. He himself drives us wherever he pleases and yet he cries out in Isaiah, "Woe to the sinful nation, the people weighed down with iniquity, the wicked seed."'[661] In the Gospel he often cries out, 'Woe'; he laments that Jerusalem refused to be gathered together.[662] And what do all the prophets utter but expostulations, reproaches, and threats? The commandments also have their own threats and horrible curses. And so if Luther's dogma is true, the wicked are right to cry out, 'Why does he still complain?' As it is their mouths are stopped for two reasons: first of all, because they murmur irreverently against God, whose majesty is to be approached devoutly, with fear and trembling; and second, because from the words of Scripture wrongly understood they infer inevitable necessity, throwing off all effort to improve their lives, even though God's grace will not be lacking to anyone if he does his very best.[663]

What is Luther telling me about God's rights in relation to us and ours in relation to God? Indeed, if we may say so, the rights are mutual, just as between a fair and kind master and his servant: the servant owes obedience and the master owes rewards, even if there were no particular agreement between them. But in fact God has pledged his faith to mankind by his promises, and he does not refuse to be accused if he should not keep the bargain.[664] For in Isaiah he speaks as follows: 'Come and accuse me.'[665] And in Micah, chapter 6 [verses 2–3], he pleads his case with the people as if he were going to win or lose under a judge. 'A judgment in the case of the Lord versus his people and Israel will be handed down. My people, what have I done to you or how have I been offensive to you? Answer me!' Here he challenges them to respond. And Paul says, 'And you, O man, who are you to answer back to God?'[666] Why so? Because the Lord

* * * * *

[661] Isa 1:4

[662] Matt 23:23–37

[663] A reference to *meritum de congruo*; see *A Discussion* CWE 76 32 and n119.

[664] Erasmus here echoes the late medieval discussion of the covenant which God, by his ordained power, established with man, making man free to sin and allowing free will some effect in meritorious actions. On this see Courtenay 'Covenant.'

[665] Isa 1:18

[666] Rom 9:20

hears someone who responds with judgment; he cannot bear someone who murmurs against him without judgment. If the problem has been solved by God's not answering, why does Paul go right on to solve the problem: 'But if God, wishing to show his anger and to make his power known, etc'?[667] And he pursues this point all the way to chapter 12, making it clear that it was not the whole people of Israel who were rejected; and that they were not rejected arbitrarily but rather because of their stubborn disbelief, so that their destruction might be an example to others; and that not all the gentiles were made sharers in the gospel but only those who believed the gospel. 'God has received nothing from us so as to owe us anything.' I grant it, except that he is good by nature and he created us. What does a father receive from his son? But still, by the very fact that he begot him he owes his son dutiful kindness. Furthermore, God bound himself to us by a covenant so that we might have more trust in him. 'He did not give us anything, he did not promise us anything, for any other reason than that he wished to.'[668] I agree, but among those things he wished to give us is also the gift of free will, the considerable power of which remains in mankind even after the fall of our first parent.

'It would have been better,' he says, 'for man to lack freedom of choice completely and to be created or confirmed so as not to be able to fall into sin.'[669] True, but by this covenant both the justice and the goodness of God shine forth more splendidly, since he wishes to be feared in such a way as to be loved and to be loved in such a way as to be feared, because this is advantageous for us. But if Luther presses the matter, I will say in turn, 'Because he is God and he does what he pleases.' But if anyone goes on to inquire why he tortures the human race so much because of someone else's sin, why he allowed man to fall when he could have held him up, why he created him when he knew he would soon fall, of such questions there is no end, and in order that our curiosity should not proceed into the abyss, Paul concludes as he had begun: just as in the beginning he checked the wicked objecter with 'You, O man, who are you?' in order to make him listen with suitable reverence, so too at the end he cuts off human scrutiny of the question by saying 'O the depths of the riches, wisdom, and knowledge of God!'[670] When he said this he cut himself off from any deeper scrutiny

* * * * *

---

[667] Rom 9:22

[668] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 717:37–9 / LW 33 188

[669] The 'quotation' with which the paragraph opens is not from Luther but an objection Erasmus imagines he would make.

[670] Rom 9:20 and 11:33

of God's plan. It was enough to have learned that the Jews deserved to be rejected because they refused to believe, that the gentiles were mercifully received into the grace of the gospel because of their undivided and sincere trust, and that these things did not happen by chance but by the admirable providence of God and in accordance with the divine pronouncements of the prophets, since God wished to manifest his justice and inescapable severity by the destruction of the Jews and his ineffable goodness by the salvation of the gentiles, everything being so balanced that God can be seen to be neither foolish nor improvident nor unjust. But if Paul meant what Luther says, he should have responded as follows to those who murmur 'Why does he complain? Why does he accuse? Why does he threaten? Why does he expostulate? etc': 'Thus speaks God crucified, but that unpreached God means something else. The crucified God commands, threatens, cajoles, reproaches, expostulates, frightens, allures; but that hidden God does none of these things but rather, according to his own good pleasure, works both good and evil in mankind: he destines some for hell, some for eternal life; what he destines necessarily happens, nor does mankind's will have any bearing on it.' If the wicked here murmur in reply, 'How can such a God be just and good?' Luther will answer for Paul that faith is most pleasing to God but that there is no opportunity for it unless God seems unjust and cruel. And if that answer does not seem adequate, he will add that because of the sin of our first parents mankind is by nature so vitiated that it differs very little from Satan and is completely swept away to all kinds of wickedness; thus it happens, he will answer, that that secret God who is to be adored and not worshipped, when he acts in mankind by his all-powerful motion, can do nothing but wickedness, blasphemies, and every sort of evildoing, and even grace can do no good work with this bad axe. With this consolation Luther sends mankind away, shutting its mouth so that it dare not open its lips but merely lets God do what he does; otherwise, 'Who resists his will?'

He also twists the sentence from the Lord's Prayer, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,'[671] to prove the ineluctable necessity of all things.[672] And so it was superfluous to make this very petition, 'Thy will be done,' if that would be done even if you asked the opposite. Indeed, it would be superfluous to ask God for anything if necessity were true as Luther imagines it. But who in heaven or on earth ever interpreted this sentence as implying the necessity of all things? Indeed, instead of that the

* * * * *

[671] Matt 6:10

[672] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 718:1–3 / LW 33 188

devout pray that mankind may submit their will to divine grace. I think that I have noticed this in Luther's writings: he does not always concentrate on what he is writing, and though it is impossible for any person to keep his mind focused constantly on any matter, Luther's pen still runs on nevertheless; and so to keep the volume growing, many things come in which do nothing but fill up the pages. At one time, he repeats the same things a dozen times over, merely using different words; at another time, he sermonizes, drawing on commonplaces; at another, he fills his pages with assertions; at another, he wastes our time with clumsy jokes and unwitty witticisms; at another, he somehow or other twists whatever offers itself or occurs to his mind to make it support his case. And besides insults, in which he abounds by nature, he has some expressions that are magical, as it were, and affect the mind of weak or uneducated readers not through reason but through a sort of vehemence. Imagination is powerful in such persons, according to the physicians, so much so that it frequently causes grave illness and death; hence it happens that in some way or other they are inspired by a spirit – would that it were the Holy Spirit! Irenaeus relates that Valentinus and Marcion used a similar artifice to trick many people, not only silly women but also judges. They had certain words which were barbarous, unknown, vehement, imperious. Pronouncing them with marvellous self-confidence, they terrified people of sound judgment; they swept the weak over to their opinion; they even bestowed the spirit of prophecy on women, ordering them over and over, enjoining them, commanding them merely to open their mouths, insisting that whatever they said would be prophetic.[673] Why did this happen? you ask. Weak minds were inflamed by the magic words and were inspired, in much the same way as those conjured by made-up words swell up and growl just as if they were being repressed by the true words of exorcism. All of Luther's books swarm with such words, but especially this one. Throw in also a loquacity beyond a steeple full of bells[674] so that the reader, no matter how sound and hardy, will nevertheless be exhausted by this disgusting performance of his. How often he infers from God's infallible foreknowledge that mankind has no choice but rather all things occur by ineluctable necessity – much to the amusement of anyone who has even an inkling about theology. This is the

* * * * *

[673] Irenaeus *Contra haereses* 1.13.1–7 PG 7 577–92. Erasmus (or the printer) seems to have confused Marcion, who was not a follower of Valentinus, with Marcus, an adherent about whom Irenaeus says what Erasmus mentions here. Both Valentinus and Marcus were second-century Gnostic heretics.

[674] See *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 284 n1026.

way he vents his anger in this section against those who examine the secrets of God in Holy Scripture, over-curious where they should not be and negligent where scrutiny is needed. Luther discloses what it means 'to examine irreverently': to combine God's certain foreknowledge with human free will. And so if God foreknows that I am going to turn my hand over, I am not free to turn it or not turn it; or, if I am free, God is deceived and will be an idol more truly than he is God. This bit of sophistry can be solved by anyone who has had ten days to spend in sophistic logic. At the same time he mixes in so many red herrings, like the many I have already pointed out, that it is wearisome merely to recount them. There is one in this section: he confuses 'to be' with 'to will' and 'to do.' In the first we admit there is some necessity; but in the second we make a distinction. 'God,' he says, 'knew that Judas would be a betrayer;[675] therefore it was inevitable that Judas be a betrayer; there is no room here for free will. And God alone did this.' 'But the same God,' he says, 'works in us both the willing and the doing. For the first cause acts together with all the actions of nature.' But the good God does not work in us an evil will, in so far as it is evil, or a wicked deed, in so far as it is wicked. Nor is there any point in the distinction he makes here between one omnipotence by which he does not do many things which he could do and another omnipotence by which he powerfully does all things in all things; 'and according to the second,' he says, 'he is called omnipotent in Scripture.'[676] What is the point of this fabrication? Certainly it does not belong in this context.

Since the next section contains nothing but flocks of words and heaps of verbiage, there is no need to waste time replying to it, except that he shamelessly hammers home that his dogma is naturally imprinted in the minds of all mortals: 'If God is omnipotent and foreknows everything infallibly, then there is no human free will.'[677] Thus so many Doctors of the church lacked ordinary, natural common understanding or else they did not believe in the infallible foreknowledge of God. But since everyone understands, even without the efforts of a teacher, whatever is imprinted within us by nature – such as the law 'Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you' – how did it happen that such an intelligent man as Luther took so long to become convinced of it? For I will not ask why even now he has so little success in persuading men of the greatest learning. But this law that Luther imagines is imprinted within everyone contradicts another law so deeply imprinted in the minds of men that even the pagans made the same inference: 'God is supremely just and good. If he is just he does not punish eternally those who sinned through no fault of their own but rather by ineluctable necessity, nor does he inflict punishments because of the wicked deeds which he himself worked in mankind. But in his goodness he will fail no one in the achievement of salvation as long as no one fails himself.' This is the true law inscribed on the minds of men, especially of Christians; it is so deeply infixed that even if the sophists were to link together a series of insoluble knots about God's infallible[678] foreknowledge, this law could not give way but would stand firm in spite of such verbal prestidigitation.

---

[675] The early editions and LB have only *futurum* 'would exist,' but the sense and the passage in Luther (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 722:18–19 / LW 33 194) require *futurum proditorem.*

[676] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 718:3–31 / LW 33 188–9. Erasmus introduces the example of Judas to illustrate Luther's generalization that, since God foreknew the sort of persons we would be and now governs us as such, we are not free to be anything except what God has foreknown. Erasmus also claims that the distinction Luther mentions here between God's *potentia absoluta* and his *potentia ordinata* is irrelevant since Luther has not shown that either kind of divine omnipotence deprives man of free will. See *A Discussion* CWE 76 50 n227.

[677] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 719:18–35 / LW 33 190–1.

To his objection that 'if Paul in this passage[679] is not definitely affirming the absolute necessity of all human affairs, it is pointless for him to bring in the comparison of the clay and the potter'[680] I have already given an answer above.[681] For just as the preceding 'You, O man, who are you to answer back to God?'[682] does not solve the problem but represses wicked murmuring, so too Paul does the same with this comparison. When I wrote *A Discussion* I showed that such comparisons are not required to match in all respects; it is sufficient if they fit the point they are designed to prove.[683] Moreover, when he asserts that in the whole epistle Paul is concerned with showing only that mankind does nothing,[684] what he says is manifestly false, as is clear on the face of it and as we showed above, for I do not want to say the same thing over and over again. With no more relevance than his

* * * * *

[678] The early editions and LB have *ineffabili* 'ineffable,' but the sense seems to require *infallibili*, as in the text just above.

[679] That is, Rom 9:19

[680] Rom 9:20–1; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 719:36–720:1 / LW 33 191

[681] See 503 above.

[682] Rom 9:20

[683] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 55.

[684] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 720:6–7 / LW 33 191

slightly earlier citation of 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven' to prove ineluctable necessity, he adduces the words of Paul to make the same point: 'The gentiles who did not pursue justification achieve it, but a justification that comes about by faith, whereas Israel by pursuing the law of justification did not attain it.'[685] Time and again he asks *Discussion* whether she understands what she is saying; it would be more just for me to ask Luther the same thing here. For what Paul is concerned with in this epistle is just this: the gentiles, though they were foreign to the Law, nevertheless received grace because they believed in the gospel; the Jews, on the other hand, who had lived under the Law from childhood, were deprived of grace because they resisted Christ. That is quite clear from what follows: 'because they sought it not from faith but from works, as they thought; they stumbled over a stumbling-block.'[686] From the works of the Law no one was ever justified, unless he had confidence in the promised Messiah; much less after Christ, when many works of the Law ceased. The outcome was different from what many people expected. Does sheer necessity therefore cause everything? This is how Luther proves his point, and this fellow is the only one who knows both the meaning and the use of Scripture! The citation I took from Paul, 'You stand by faith; do not be proud,' he explains away as follows: 'The verbs,' he says, 'are imperative and subjunctive,' and he boasts that he has said enough on that point before.[687] Indeed I grant he has said more than enough, but he hasn't proved anything yet. As I have already said so often, however, by the judgment of common sense such commands imply the ability to perform what they command. And if the crucified God delighted to speak that way, what need was there for the apostles to talk the same way? Indeed, even today why do the teachers of the people speak in this way?

Another point: 'Paul,' he says, 'does not say that we can believe but that God is able to graft them in.' True, but this is preceded by 'if they do not remain in disbelief.'[688] For them to come to their senses is admittedly to a very slight degree within their power, but their effort is so important that if it is not joined to the grace of God anyone who perishes should blame himself.[689] Here I make an exception of those whom God has handed over to a reprobate understanding because their previous actions deserved it,

* * * * *

[685] Rom 9:30–1; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 720:8–9 / LW 33 191

[686] Rom 9:32

[687] Rom 11:20; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 720:12–15 / LW 33 192

[688] Rom 11:22–3; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 720:16–17 / LW 33 192

[689] Cf 490 above. Even the Jews must make some effort to return to the fold.

and also of the particular plans of God whereby he suddenly transforms someone into a different person or withholds grace for a time from someone he loves. According to this scheme of things a person is able to believe or not to believe. Who does not know that a person is grafted into the body of Christ through the Spirit, not by his own powers? I pass over Luther's jeers about the transitions and concluding statements of my *Discussion*, who he says does not seriously believe in her case.[690] What limit would there be to the size of my volume if, like Luther, I opposed every single statement, dwelling on it, bearing down on it, pressing upon it, returning to it? And to speak frankly, I would have preferred to spend the few days I devoted to *A Discussion* on something else. I knew that I was doing no more than twisting a donkey's tail.[691] For what could be more foolish than to argue with someone who will not accept anything but the words of Scripture but reserves to himself alone the right to interpret them, and even allows himself, whenever it is convenient, to fabricate ideas which can no more be elicited from Scripture than blood from a turnip?[692] And still he thinks he is a marvellous debater, and when he has done such things he sings his own praises.

[*Judas and the necessity of immutability*]

He goes on to assail the argument I made that there is nothing which keeps freedom from being consistent with some necessity, as, for example, 'God necessarily generated the Son, and yet he did it voluntarily and freely because he was not coerced.' 'We are talking,' he says, 'about the necessity of immutability.'[693] I, too, am talking about the same thing, nor do I understand that there is coercion when someone suffers or does what he does not wish to do, but rather when he is unable not to will what he wills. But if the word 'coercion' is unacceptable, substitute 'by his immutable nature' for 'not coerced.' For I never take Luther to task for the necessity of coercion which he himself made up, namely the necessity by which a person is forced to do something he does not wish to do. But in fact, the sort of coercion which I posit here seems to be introduced by Luther when he says that mankind by their own nature will nothing but wicked deeds

* * * * *

[690] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 720:17–24 / LW 33 192

[691] Literally, seizing a cicada by the wing. According to *Adagia* I ix 28, if you lift up a cicada by its wing it makes even more noise.

[692] Literally, 'milk from a piece of pumice,' a proverb for the impossible; cf *Adagia* I iv 75.

[693] *A Discussion* CWE 76 51; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 720:30–2 / LW 33 192

and cannot either will or do anything else. If this will is turned in another direction by grace, doesn't grace in a sense exert its power and force, as happens when a person is forced by a love potion or some other drug to love someone he hated and to hate someone he loved or when a king by his command makes a person will something he would otherwise not have willed? Thus force is exerted on water when it is made to boil in a hot kettle, though by its own nature it is cold. And so, even though Luther divides necessity into a violent kind, which applies to the work, and an infallible kind, which applies to the time, denying that he is speaking of the first kind of necessity,[694] he nevertheless does not escape what he wants to avoid in the case of someone without grace whose will is transformed by grace. Indeed, if light is taken away, I am forced to see nothing. Just so a certain force is exerted on someone who is forced into wickedness by the removal of grace, not for any fault of his own but at God's own pleasure. Finally, when Paul assumes the role of a sinner, he writes that he wills the good but cannot carry out what he wills and thus does what he does not will.[695] But it is not clear to me where Luther got this distinction. The scholastic theologians distinguish necessity of immutability from necessity of inevitability: the first applies to the present and the past; the second, to the future. By the first, God the Father begot the Son; and by the second, everyone must die and the judgment of the living and the dead will come. Then again, if God foreknew that Judas would exist, it was necessary that he exist by the necessity of inevitability, but it is not necessary by the same necessity that Judas betray the Lord if the Lord foreknew he would do this. 'Judas betrayed the Lord by an act of will,' as Luther confesses (though elsewhere he teaches that the human will does nothing, whether for good or evil). 'But I say that this willing,' he says, 'was certainly and infallibly going to happen in Judas himself if God foreknew it.'[696] I agree. But it does not immediately follow that Judas necessarily took upon himself the will to betray; but rather he was able not to do so if he had preferred to imitate the other apostles instead of being fascinated with money. Now let us suppose that Judas was at one time in a state of grace. What changed his will? Wasn't it free choice turning away towards evil courses? 'Quite the contrary,' says Luther, 'by the will of God grace was withdrawn.'[697] And so there was a certain force here, as I just said. But Luther will not admit to

* * * * *

[694] That is, the 'violent kind'; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 720:35–721:4 / LW 33 193
[695] Rom 7:18–19
[696] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 720:33–5 / LW 33 193
[697] Erasmus is not quoting Luther but imagining his response.

such a force but only to infallible necessity. We recognize God's infallible foreknowledge, but in orthodox writers we nowhere read about an infallible necessity. What this phrase means to Luther, he can look to for himself; I certainly don't understand it.

'We are not discussing,' he says, 'whether Judas became a traitor willingly or unwillingly but whether at a time predetermined by God it was infallibly bound to happen that Judas willingly betrayed Christ.'[698] I too am not concerned with whether Judas unwillingly betrayed Christ – although whoever commits a wicked deed against the dictates of his conscience acts in a certain sense unwillingly and is forced by the attraction and enticement of evil desires – but whether he could have avoided committing the crime. Luther denies it; I disagree with him; that is the point at issue. I find the phrase 'was bound' to be suspect, since it implies necessity, unless you are talking about necessity of the consequence.[699] Certainly what an infallible God foreknew would happen would in fact happen. And still, Judas was able not to take upon himself the will to betray, or having done so, he could have rejected it; time and again at the Last Supper and after it he was called upon to repent. The reason he did not change it was the power of free will, withdrawing itself from the grace that impelled and invited him to repent. 'What if he had changed his will?' *Discussion* has already solved that problem: 'God's foreknowledge would not have been false or his will impeded, since God would have foreknown and willed the very fact that he would change it.'[700] It is well established, even among schoolboys, that even infallible foreknowledge also stands unshaken in matters that are purely contingent because they depend on human free will. Something is contingent if it can be or not be before it is done, as, for example, I now can turn my pen or not turn it, and nevertheless God foreknows whatever I am going to do with no less certainty than if the deed were necessary. Luther conveniently overlooks what *Discussion* says and gnaws away at something else. 'See,' he says, 'what *Discussion* says here: "If you consider God's infallible foreknowledge, it was necessary that Judas was going to be a traitor. But Judas could have changed his own will." Do you actually understand what you

* * * * *

---

[698] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 721:1–4 / LW 33 193

[699] Erasmus admits necessity of the consequence in such a case (if God foreknows a person will choose something, it is necessary that the person make that choice), but not necessity of the consequent (if God foreknows a person will choose something, he will choose it, but he will not do so necessarily – that is, he was free not to choose it). See *A Discussion* CWE 76 52 n234.

[700] *A Discussion* CWE 76 51–2

are saying, my dear *Discussion*?'[701] Indeed, Luther, do you understand what you are saying? Sharp fellow that you are, don't you see that these points were proposed and afterwards refuted, as I showed once before? Just as earlier he confused the opinions about free will, so too with equal subtlety he now confuses the objection with the response. So alert is this fellow who always makes *Discussion* out to be snoring and drunk! In passing he drags in here what *Discussion* said in her conclusion, that a person who has surrendered to sin cannot will anything pious; this he here distorts into 'can will nothing except evil,' as if there were no middle ground between good and evil.[702] But I have already replied time after time to the endless changes he rings on this foolishness. You have what *Discussion* says; now listen to what Luther says: 'How could Judas change his own will as long as God's infallible foreknowledge stood unimpaired? Could he change God's foreknowledge and make it fallible?'[703] No, my good man, but God foreknew this very fact: the ultimate direction which that wavering will, turning first one way and then another at its pleasure, would take. Has not *Discussion* made it sufficiently clear with transparent arguments that God's foreknowledge, however infallible, does not impose necessity of immutability or inevitability on the human will? What reason does he have, then, to boast that *Discussion* surrenders here, deserts the standard, throws away her weapons, and leaves the field, foisting the argument she undertook off onto scholastic subtleties such as the distinction between necessity of the consequent and necessity of the consequence, which she does not wish to pursue, or that, when the need for courage is the greatest, I turn tail and leave to others the business of responding, or that instead I should not have entered the fight at all?[704]

Why should I mention the rest? There is prolix and pretentious palaver about the cardinal issue in the case, about rhetorical transitions and irrelevant trifles, about a mind not really concerned about the issue, and about

* * * * *

[701] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 721:4–6 / LW 33 193, quoting *A Discussion* CWE 76 51

[702] Erasmus does not say towards the end of *A Discussion* what he attributes to himself here, except very generally that the sinner who rejects grace cannot perform meritorious actions. He seems instead to refer to what he says immediately after the passages just quoted by Luther: God hardened Pharaoh's heart in the sense that he withdrew his grace as Pharaoh had deserved by giving himself over to sin (*A Discussion* CWE 76 52). It is far from certain that Luther actually intended to refer to this passage when he remarked in passing that 'the will can only will evil' (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 721:6–7 / LW 33 193).

[703] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 721:8–9 / LW 33 193

[704] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 721:9–15 / LW 33 193

the need to treat theological questions seriously. And our Braggadocchio[705] carries on about such things as if *Discussion* had not touched on the cardinal issue, although – as I have shown and will later show even more clearly – there is not a single argument in his *Assertion* or in this triumphant book that I have not examined and refuted, if he were only willing to see it, or rather to admit it. It has been amply demonstrated that foreknowledge, however infallible, does not impose necessity of inevitability on the human will. The question about the will is more difficult, that is, about God's predestination and decrees.[706] On this point *Discussion* omitted no distinctions to help solve the problem: she distinguished the nature of events, some of which depend on our will, some not at all; some pertain to our salvation, others not, such as whether or not we are rich or poor. She distinguished the outcome from the intention; she distinguished the conditional, permissive, signified, and efficacious wills of God. She warded off Luther's weapon of exaggerating the corruption of human nature so completely that not even the Holy Spirit can perform any good work in it. She warded off another weapon, the all-powerful motion,[707] which Luther seems incidentally to have borrowed from *Discussion*; for, though he boasts of no weapon more than this one, it did not occur to him in his *Assertion* when he was propounding the absolute necessity of all events. And still, at the same time, *Discussion* is fighting with her adversary according to rules laid down by him. Where, then, does *Discussion* throw away her shield[708] and turn tail? Because she says she does not want to pursue similar subtleties of the scholastics? What need was there to pursue them further, since I had already presented enough to make the point satisfactorily, especially since Luther usually holds such hair-splitting arguments in the deepest contempt when they make against him, though he embraces them when he runs aground on the sandy flats of some question. Does he want me to repeat here all the scholastic chatter about future contingents, God's foreknowledge and his predestination? But it was agreed that the case would be tried with the evidence of Scripture. In mid-course *Discussion* snatched an argument to solve the problem and refute Luther's sheer necessity. This done, where does the shield-thrower betake herself? To what she had undertaken to do: to clarifying the scriptural passages that

---

[705] Literally, *Pyrgopolinices* 'Tower-town-burner,' a character in Plautus' *Miles gloriosus*

[706] Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 48–53.

[707] That is, the *concursus generalis* (see *A Discussion* CWE 76 31 n112)

[708] Here Erasmus Latinizes ῥιψάσπιδα as *rhipsaspidem*, playing on the title *Hyperaspistes*. Cf *Adagia* I ix 81 and II ii 97.

Luther had twisted to support his dogma. Surely nothing could be more shameful for a soldier than to flee from the field of battle in order to remove some obstacle and then return to the front line![709]

Earlier he spoke about necessity of the consequent and necessity of consequence in such a way as to make me suspect that the fellow was deliberately obscuring the matter with verbal smokescreens. Here he explains them in such a way that he seems not to understand the point about which he pours out so many words. For this is his argument: 'For if you concede necessity of the consequence, free will is vanquished and struck down, nor is there any help from the necessity or the contingency of the consequent. What do I care if free will is not forced but rather does what it does willingly? It is enough for me if you concede that it is by necessity that it will do willingly what it does and that it cannot be otherwise, if God has foreknown it.'[710] That is what he says. First, he mixes his coercion in here, though I am talking about the necessity of inevitability, to use the proper scholastic terminology. Therefore, when they speak of necessity of the consequent, they mean that the person who is to act cannot avoid doing what is foreknown. If Luther calls this inevitable necessity coercion, that is fine with me. In Judas we deny that there was this sort of necessity, since free will and the impelling grace of God both remained in him. Furthermore, in this whole disputation Luther seems to be mistaken in the words he uses, taking 'it will necessarily happen' to mean that if God foreknows it, it will certainly and undoubtedly happen, as if whatever is true and certain were also necessary. God foreknows whether or not I will turn my hand over, and what he foreknows will certainly happen; but nevertheless, since whether it happens or not depends on my will, I do not do it necessarily but contingently. And I have contingently turned my will towards doing it, I have lifted up my hand, and I myself am not yet certain whether I want to turn it palm down or palm up; but what is not certain to me is certain to God. However God knows it will be, that is how it will certainly be, but not necessarily; for it was possible for it not to have happened in that way if I had wished it not to. And nevertheless we have here necessity of the consequence: if God foreknows that I will show my hand palm up, it necessarily follows[711] that I will do it, and nevertheless I do it contingently, just as God also foreknows this contingently. The following inference of Luther is therefore false: 'This is the result of the necessity of consequence; that

* * * * *

[709] The sentence is ironical; see *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 721:8–14 / LW 33 193.
[710] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 722:4–9 / LW 33 194
[711] Latin *consequitur,* to match necessity of the consequence

is, if God foreknows something it necessarily happens; that is, there is no free will.'[712] A lookout sees that a person who has wandered off the road will come among robbers. Does his seeing it impose on the traveller the necessity of wandering and falling into the hands of robbers?

See how this frivolous argumentation is followed by a magnificent assertion: 'This necessity of the consequence is not obscure or ambiguous, and even if the Doctors of all the ages were blind, they would be forced to admit it because it is palpably manifest and certain.'[713] I am surprised he didn't add 'they would run roughshod to get on the bandwagon,'[714] to fatten up the hyperbole! Either I do not see or Luther does not yet understand what necessity of the consequence and necessity of the consequent mean.[715] He gives this as an example of the necessity of consequence: 'If God foreknows it, it happens necessarily.' But in fact this is necessity of the consequent rather than that of consequence. It would be different if he said, 'It is necessary that it happen if God foreknows it.' But it does not follow from 'God certainly foreknows it' that 'it must happen necessarily.' He gives this example of necessity of consequence: 'God foreknows that Judas will be a traitor; therefore it will happen certainly and infallibly that Judas will be a traitor.'[716] What is the difference between this and the other proposition,[717] except that the other one is a false conditional proposition and this is an equally false deduction, if Luther does not distinguish, as he does not, what is certain and infallible from what happens necessarily? With one view God knows all things as they were, are, and will be. And this awareness does not change the nature of an event, but rather the event changes the mode of God's awareness: what happens necessarily he knows necessarily; what happens contingently he knows as contingent. When Peter runs, God knows with certainty that he is running, but he still runs contingently; but when he stops running, God knows with equal certainty that the proposition 'Peter is running' is false, and he knows the future in the same way as he knows the present. When I see Peter running, I know with certainty that he is running, but he is not running necessarily; for he is able not to run, he can stop when he wants to. But if my awareness does not impose any necessity on events that are done by free choice, neither does the

* * * * *

712 *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 722:12–13 / LW 33 195
713 *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 722:13–16 / LW 33 195
714 *Adagia* II vii 12
715 See McSorley 229–30, 242, 259, 319.
716 *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 722:18–19 / LW 33 195
717 That is, 'If God foreknows it, it happens necessarily'

foreknowledge of God; and his awareness can in some fashion be changed according to our choice, but still it cannot be deceived, just as I am not deceived when I see a person doing something or other. The character of the action is the reason I see it in one way or in another; my knowledge does not cause it to happen in one way or another. For whether I see him or not, he is still doing what he is doing. The same argument applies to foreknowledge. If I see Peter running, it follows that the proposition 'Peter is running' is true, but it does not follow that what is by nature contingent is necessarily true. Thus it follows from 'God knows that this will happen' that 'therefore it will happen.' But it does not follow that 'it will happen necessarily.' Otherwise it would follow that whatever is to happen will happen necessarily and nothing would happen contingently; every true proposition about the future would be necessary and every false proposition about the future would be impossible – a conception long since exploded by the philosophers. And where would there be any room for the free will that Luther attributes to mankind in matters beneath him?[718] Whatever we reason about lower affairs also applies to the higher will; if we eliminate it in one we should also do so in the other. God has the same foreknowledge of the highest and lowest things – unless perhaps Luther will say that some things escape God's foreknowledge.

He goes on putting up smokescreens:[719] 'Because Judas,' he says, 'can change the will to betray, therefore there is no necessity of the consequent.'[720] I confess it, I agree, and it is true if there is any difference between the contingent and the necessary or between a contingent proposition and a necessary one. Nor is something that is certainly and infallibly true also necessarily true. Imagine that Peter is going to move his thumb; it will be contingently true that Peter will move his thumb and, if he moves it, that he is moving his thumb. When he stops moving it, it will be contingently true that Peter moved his thumb (although the truth of this is immutable) because its truth depends on the past, when Peter could move or not move his thumb. Since young students are quite familiar with such points, I am amazed that it did not occur to Luther that he is forcing ridiculous ideas on us. He goes on splitting hairs, not to say talking nonsense. 'I ask you,' he says, 'how can these two statements be consistent: "Judas can will not to betray" and "It is necessary that Judas will to betray"?'[721]

* * * * *

---

[718] See 487 above.

[719] Cf *Adagia* I iii 41.

[720] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 722:20–1 / LW 33 195; cf 495 and n624 above.

[721] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 722:21–3 / LW 33 195

I confess they are contradictory. What then? Nowhere does *Discussion* pronounce that this is a true proposition: 'It is necessary that Judas will to betray.' Quite the contrary, she holds it to be manifestly false. 'He will not, you say, be forced to betray against his will.'[722] Who said this? Luther, not *Discussion*. 'I ask for one thing,' he says, 'you give me another.' How so? 'The reply was to be about the necessity of the consequent and you put forward an example of the coercion of the consequent.'[723] Where is such an example? These are the words of *Discussion*: 'They admit that it necessarily follows that Judas would betray the Lord if God willed this from eternity with his efficacious will, but they deny that it follows that therefore he will necessarily betray him.'[724] Here there are none of the things Luther throws around. And nevertheless I draw an inference from God's efficacious will; he draws an inference from God's foreknowledge, an inference already exploded. What consistency is there in these two ideas of Luther's? – he grants that Judas existed contingently, but nevertheless he asserts that Judas acted necessarily. On the other hand, theologians confess that God exists necessarily but nevertheless does not know necessarily, although he knows everything infallibly. If 'contingent' includes in its meaning to be able to do something or not to do it, how can something be done necessarily if it is done contingently? But Judas betrayed the Lord contingently precisely because he could will to betray him and he could will not to. I was occupied with such hair-splitting as a young man, not very willingly and not very successfully,[725] and after such a long interval of time, I do not remember very much. Hence I touched on it somewhat lightly in *A Discussion* so as not to be burdensome to the reader. And yet Luther, who has spent a large part of his life in such matters, up to this point has conducted himself in a duller and crazier way than anywhere else.

[*The meaning of the story of Jacob and Esau: Genesis 25:23, Romans 9:11–13*]
Now Luther takes up another passage, one about Jacob and Esau: even when they were not yet born, 'it was said of them, "The elder shall serve

---

[722] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 722:23–5 / LW 33 195

[723] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 722:26–8 / LW 33 195

[724] *A Discussion* CWE 76 52

[725] Literally, 'without much assistance from Minerva.' Cf *Adagia* I i 42. Erasmus refers to his years at the Collège de Montaigu at the University of Paris, where he studied scholastic theology; however much he disliked it then and later, he became quite familiar with it.

the younger." '[726] One point among others made by *Discussion* is that this is not properly spoken about what pertains to salvation or damnation. For so far as salvation is concerned, it makes no difference whether you are a master or a servant.[727] Here Luther, as if he had found a wide open field for his rampages, makes a marvellous to-do about *Discussion*'s making a mockery of Scripture and fleeing from the truth; time after time he calls Jerome sacrilegious and curses him with an anathema because he says that sometimes certain evidence from Scripture gives support to Paul which is not found in its original context.[728] Why say more? The tragedy is enormous! But here I would like to call upon Luther to ask him whether he was in his right mind when he made such a to-do over this. In this passage I make no mention of Jerome, and Luther grants my interpretation that this text does not pertain to eternal salvation but to advantages and disadvantages in this life. For we have no certainty about whether Esau was damned to hell. But just as a king is said to love those whom he raises to the highest honours and to hate those whom he does not deign to honour but rather fines and despoils, so God speaks in Scripture. Here I make no use of the statement of Jerome execrated by Luther, nor do I myself signify that Paul adduces something inappropriate. And so he is talking like a crazy man when he speaks of the sacrilegious

* * * * *

[726] Rom 9:13 (cf Gen 25:23; Mal 1:2–3); *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 722:31–3 / LW 33 195–6; *A Discussion* CWE 76 53

[727] *A Discussion* CWE 76 53

[728] Without mentioning Jerome, Erasmus had said that some 'quotations are more polemical in Paul than in the prophets from whom they are taken' (*A Discussion* CWE 76 54). Luther had attributed this charge to Jerome: 'Jerome ... dares ... to say that things have a polemic force in Paul which in their proper contexts they do not have' (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 723:2–4 / LW 33 196). Erasmus had mentioned Jerome's point about Paul's altered citation of the unknown god of the Athenians in his *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* (LB VI 501), but Luther's language here shows that he is remembering Folly's formulation of the same point in *Moriae Encomium* (ASD IV-3 183:998–184:4 and notes): 'Apud diuum Paulum pugnent diuinae scripturae verba, quae suo loco non pugnant, si qua fides illi πενταγλώττῳ Hieronymo' ('Even in St Paul the message of Scripture receives support from some words which, in their original context, do not support it, at least if we have any confidence in quinquelingual Jerome'). Luther here writes, 'Illud Hieronymianum est ... ea pugnare apud Paulum, quae locis suis non pugnant,' using (like Folly) 'pugnare' in the unusual sense of 'fight for, support.' When Erasmus returns to this point later he specifically mentions the episode of the Athenian altar, which Folly had cited (538 below).

mouth of Jerome, his dullness and drowsiness, cursing him with an anathema. But if perhaps I did have Jerome quite firmly in mind, what need was there for such a tragical interpretation as 'In Paul they offer support which they do not offer in their original context, that is, when Paul is laying the foundations of Christian doctrine, he does nothing but corrupt the divine Scriptures and mocks the souls of the faithful with an opinion made up out of his own brain, etc.'[729] Bravo! this is bringing out the divine thunderbolts! It is wearisome to recount the rest. But in the end, what does Luther find offensive? If the passage does not apply to salvation or eternal damnation but rather to temporal honour, does that mean that Paul is corrupting Scripture? Is it anything new for Scripture to bring in bodily examples to illustrate spiritual matters? Just as at that time God turned upside down the honour of the first-born and intended the elder to serve the younger, so now he gave the honour to the gentiles, who were formerly utterly scorned, and he repudiated the Jews, his chosen people, thus turning things upside down. But just as the earlier event did not happen by chance but by the determination of God, so too what is now done with the Jews and the gentiles. What if I say that not even here is Paul dealing only with the reason for eternal salvation but with the transfer of the glory of the Jews to the gentiles? – the city is overturned, the kingdom has been eliminated, the temple has been destroyed, the people themselves have been scattered over the face of the earth, the glory of religion is possessed by the gentiles. But in so far as the process of salvation is specifically concerned, the road to salvation is not closed to any of the Jews, nor are all gentiles accepted, but the road of faith is open to both, just as from all eternity God foreknew and determined it would be, so that the gentiles would have no need to lack confidence when they considered their wicked way of life, nor the Jews to murmur, since God had predicted by the mouth of his prophets that the glory of the Law would be outworn and the law of the gospel spread over the whole world.

He asserts that this passage was rightly cited by Paul, even if he was speaking only of temporal honour.[730] He says the same thing I do. Why, then, is he making a court case of it? Is there a single syllable in my *Discussion*, at least in this passage, which takes Paul to task for his citation? This is what *Discussion* says: 'so that, as used by Paul, this quotation serves not so much as a proof of necessity but rather to refute the arrogance of the Jews.'[731] From these words he should rather have assumed that the words

* * * * *

[729] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 722:37–723:7 / LW 33 196
[730] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 723:19–21 / LW 33 197
[731] *A Discussion* CWE 76 53

as used by the prophet support necessity more than they do in Paul. For his purposes Paul cited these words most aptly; for Luther's purpose of proving necessity, they contribute nothing, since that is not what Paul is dealing with here. I recognize that Paul's words apply to those not yet born: before they had done anything either good or bad, it was said to their pregnant mother – not to Sarah, as Luther imagines, but to Rebecca – 'The elder shall serve the younger.' Let the major issue reside in these words; I make no objection. What does Luther say? 'But *Discussion* deliberately overlooks this and never discusses merits.'[732] Isn't the fellow ashamed of such patent nonsense? In *A Discussion*, a little later in this passage, we find: 'But since, when God hates or loves, he does so for just reasons, his hatred and love are no more of an impediment to free will when he directs them at the unborn than they are when he directs them at the already born. He hates those not yet born because he foreknows with certainty that they will do things deserving of hatred; he hates those already born because they are committing things deserving of hatred.'[733] Though *Discussion* devotes many words to this idea, nevertheless Luther says that she skips over it rhetorically and does not touch on merits. But what does Luther himself infer from Paul's words? Isn't it this: that the Jews were rejected and the gentiles called to the gospel not by their merits but only by the will of God, and that this happened by sheer necessity, so that in neither group did free will do anything at all? Why, then, does Paul himself mention the deserts of the Jews, which caused them to be rejected by God? Though they were called upon in so many ways, they most stubbornly 'resisted the Holy Spirit,' as Stephen said.[734] They were not at all moved by the example of the patriarchs, the strict observance of the Law, the divine pronouncements of the prophets, the presence of the Lord himself, his miracles and good deeds; all this they scorned and hanged the author of salvation on the cross. Is this not enough to make them deserve to be rejected? All this Paul includes in the polite term 'disbelief.' Nor does he refrain from mentioning merit among the gentiles: not, of course, the deeds of their former lives, but their trust in Christ.

What, then, is the point of the words 'not based on works, but on the one who calls'?[735] The point was to shut the mouths of the Jews when they murmured against accepting the gentiles. They cried out: 'Why do you

* * * * *

[732] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 723:28–9 / LW 33 197
[733] *A Discussion* CWE 76 53–4
[734] Acts 7:51 and Rom 11:20
[735] Rom 9:12

confer such a great honour on the wicked gentiles?' God replies: 'Why was it said about those not yet born, "The elder shall serve the younger"? If you have no answer to this, even though it is written in your Law, stop asking why I place the gentiles ahead of the Israelites. I do not love and hate like men, who conceive love and hatred from deeds already done. Before people are born, I know what they will be like and I predestine for each what each deserves. That is the reason I decided Esau's position as first-born would do him no good, because I knew what his character would be. I favoured Jacob because I foreknew from eternity that he would be a devout man and worthy of this honour.'[736] In this case the will of his father Isaac came to nought, for he had intended to bestow his blessing on Esau, whom he loved, not knowing which would be more worthy of love or hatred; but the decree of God prevailed. For in this passage, the Apostle compares the Jews with Esau and the gentiles with Jacob, just as a bit later he compares the Jews with Pharaoh. Esau obeyed the will of his father by going out to hunt, and yet he was tricked out of the blessing; Jacob did no service to his father and yet he intercepted the blessing by deception. Isaac was the Law, observed according to the flesh; Rebecca, who formed the plan of substitution, was grace. There were no preceding merits when it was said to the mother, 'The elder shall serve the younger,' but God, to whom all things are present, foresaw the merits. Therefore it is not for mankind to murmur against God about why he honours one and rejects another. For he knows secret reasons, hidden from men, and his decision is based on the future, not on the past. But the saying 'so that the purpose of God might stand according to his election, not based on works but on the one who calls'[737] applies principally to the calling of the gentiles, who were called neither because of their lineage nor their observance of the Law, according to the purpose of God, who has mercy on whomever he wishes, but in such a way that he never rejects someone who does not deserve it, condemning, as Bernard says, justly, saving mercifully.[738]

But in this discourse why does Paul mix in language which seems to exclude all merit in both groups[739] and to attribute everything to the will of God? First of all, as I said, in order to check irreverent curiosity in matters

* * * * *

[736] The protest of the Jews and God's reply are not quotations but are supplied by Erasmus himself.

[737] Rom 9:11–12

[738] Bernard *Tractatus* 13.42 in *Opera omnia* III 196 / *On Grace and Free Choice* in *Treatises III* 100

[739] That is, Jews and gentiles

of God's plan; furthermore, because his subject matter is such that from one side or the other it raises many questions that cannot be answered by mankind: some about what are called external goods and evils that are not dependent on the human will, some about matters that pertain to eternal salvation. For who demands from God a reason why one person is born male, another female; one person a king, another a barbarous slave; one rich, another poor; one handsome, another ugly; one with a healthy and solid constitution, another subject to horrible and unremitting diseases; one long-lived, another who is to die right away in the cradle, another who is forced to suffocate in the recesses of his mother's womb; one brilliantly intelligent, another so stupid as to be not far removed from brute beasts; one with a malleable temperament easily led to all manner of virtue, another who seems born to a life of crime? Or again, why God willed to call the gentiles to the grace of the gospel, when he had allowed them to serve demons and idols for so many centuries? Or, since Paul was caught up in the same raging zeal against Christians as others, why did he reach out and forcibly draw Paul to himself and leave the others to their wickedness and blindness? In treating this subject matter, these and very many other issues come up that demand the restraint of human curiosity and that must be faced with simple faith and obedient submission. Otherwise, the questioner will be told: 'Does the clay say to the potter, "Why did you fashion me in this way?"'[740] Although such matters are not always based on merit, still there are fully just underlying reasons why God willed or permitted such outcomes.

I have shown what Paul is driving at in this passage; I have shown that these points neatly fit in with his intention; I have shown that the calling, election, and foreknowledge of God do not take away man's free will, especially in matters pertaining to eternal salvation. Here, perhaps, Luther will guffaw and ridicule the dream of drunken *Discussion*. *Discussion* has the same right to laugh at Luther's dream. The fact is I have made it clear from the drift of the discourse itself that what I propose is what Paul meant, and I follow the straightforward meaning of words, excluding figures of speech. Now if I reported the interpretation of Origen or Jerome, Luther would be stirred up to blaspheme once again. What will he say, however, about Chrysostom, Augustine, or Ambrose, whose interpretation agrees with mine? I will accurately set down the words of Chrysostom:[741]

* * * * *

---

[740] Rom 9:20

[741] Chrysostom *Commentarius in epistolam ad Romanos* 16.4–7 PG 60 554–9

'Not only that, but Rebecca was also pregnant by one man, our father Isaac.'[742] It was an important question,[743] and therefore Paul brings many arguments to bear and exploits every source to find a solution. For if it is strange and hard to believe that after such great promises they fall away, it is even harder to believe that we should inherit their advantages, though we had no such hopes. It is just as if the son of a king, to whom the succession of his father's kingdom had been promised, should be thrust down into the lower classes, and in his place some condemned criminal, defiled with countless wicked deeds, should be released from prison and given the throne destined for the son. What, Paul says, would you have to say? Was it because the son was unworthy? But the criminal was also unworthy, far more so than the son. Therefore they should both have been honoured or both punished. Something like this is what happened to the gentiles and the Jews, though it was even more amazing. For in an earlier passage he declared that all were unworthy, saying 'All have sinned, and all need the glory of God.'[744] But the strange thing is that, though all were equally unworthy, only the gentiles were saved. Furthermore, another person, he says, could raise the question: if God was not going to fulfil his promises, why did he make them?[745] For, though men are deceived because they are ignorant of the future and so they often promise their gifts to the unworthy, God sees both the present and the future and knows them with full certainty. Was it because they showed themselves to be unworthy of the promises and for that reason were not to receive what was promised? But why promise it? How does Paul resolve this difficulty? He does it by showing who that Israel is to whom the promise was made. After this was shown, the other point could also be shown, namely that all the promises were fulfilled. Therefore, to make this clear, he says: 'For not everyone born of Israel is an Israelite.'[746] And that is why he does not even use the word 'Jacob,' but rather 'Israel,' because it recalled the strength of a just man and the gift given from heaven and the fact that God was seen by him.[747]

* * * * *

---

[742] Rom 9:10

[743] The question, that is, whether the word of God failed because all the Israelites were not saved; cf Rom 9:4–6. Cf also Rom 9:14: 'Is there no injustice on God's part?'

[744] Rom 3:23

[745] Rom 9:20

[746] Rom 9:6

[747] Cf Gen 32:24–31. Jacob was given the name Israel ('struggling with God') after he wrestled with the angel, showing, perhaps, the strength of a just man. In his vision Jacob saw God and received the gift of a blessing.

Certainly he says that 'all have sinned and lack the glory of God.'[748] But if all have sinned, how does it happen that some are saved, some are destroyed? Because not everyone wished to give their assent.[749] Clearly, in so far as that is concerned, all are saved.[750] However, Paul does not explain that yet but instead goes beyond what is necessary to solve the problem by using other examples and bringing up another question, just as in the preceding passage he answered one very difficult question by raising a different one. For when someone asked how it happened that by the righteousness of Christ all the others shared in his righteousness, he mentioned Adam in passing: 'For if death reigned by the sin of one man, much more will those who have received an abundance of grace reign in life.'[751] But even this question which could be asked about Adam he does not answer; but he uses it to answer the question he himself had posed, showing that it is more reasonable that he who died for them should have power over us at his discretion. For to many persons it does not seem quite reasonable that all should be punished for the sin of one. But it can seem more reasonable and worthy of God that all should be justified by the amendment offered by one. But still he does not solve the matter which was called into doubt, because the more inexplicable it remains, the more the mouths of the Jews are shut, and the question raised concerning this matter changed into the other, and the one makes the other clearer.

Similarly, in this passage Paul uses other difficulties to answer the question posed here. For his quarrel was with the Jews. Why this strategy? He brings up difficulties which he does not fully resolve.[752] For he was not responsible for clearing up so many difficulties in so far as his quarrel with the Jews was concerned, but he used them to make all his own points clearer. For he says: Why are you surprised that in our days some of the Jews are saved and some are not, since anyone can say that the same thing happened back in the time of the patriarchs? For why is Isaac alone called the seed, since Abraham was also the father of Ishmael and of many others as well? Someone may say: He was born of a mother who was a slave. But what does that have to do with the person who begot him? But still I will not argue the point: let

* * * * *

---

[748] Rom 3:23

[749] Rom 3:24; cf 4:16.

[750] After this phrase Erasmus' translation omits 'for all have been called.'

[751] Rom 5:17

[752] This sentence is followed by a question mark in the 1527 edition and in LB. But in the Greek text it is a statement, not a question, as the context seems to require, and I have so translated it. The question mark is probably a typographical error.

Ishmael be cast out because of his mother. What shall we say about those presented to him by Keturah?[753] Were they not freeborn of a mother who was free? Why were they not honoured with the same privileges as Isaac? But why am I speaking of these? Rebecca was the one and only wife of Isaac, and she bore two children, both sons of Isaac. And yet these children, though they had the same father, the same mother, though they caused the same travail when they were born, though they had both mother and father in common and were twins besides, they were still not allotted the same honour. But here you cannot account for it by the slavery of the mother as with Ishmael, or account for it by the fact that one issued from one womb, the other from another, as with Sarah and Keturah, since they shared the same time of labour and birth-throes. Therefore, as if to pass on to an even more striking example, 'Not only,' he says, 'did this happen in the case of Isaac but also of Rebecca, who became pregnant by one man, our father Isaac. For when they were not yet born,' he says, 'and had not done anything good or bad, so that the purpose of God might stand according to his election and not be based on works but on the one who calls, it was said to her: "The elder shall serve the younger"; as it is written, "I have loved Jacob but Esau I hated."'[754] Why, then, was the one loved and the other hated? Why was one given lordship and the other handed over into slavery? Because one was evil and the other good? But they had not even been born when in fact the one was honoured and the other condemned; they had not been born when God said to them, 'The elder shall serve the younger.' What reason, then, did God have to say this? Because he does not look to the outcome of events as men do, in order to perceive who is good and who is evil, but before they do anything he has perceived who is evil and who is not.

And this happened even more wonderfully among the Israelites. For why, he says,[755] am I speaking about Esau and Jacob, one of whom was good and the other evil, since all the Israelites shared their sin in common? All adored the calf, but some received mercy, others did not.[756] 'For I will have mercy,' he says, 'on whom I have mercy, and I will take pity on whom I take pity.'[757] The same thing can be seen in those who are punished. For what will you say about Pharaoh, who was punished, and that so grievously? Because he was hard and disobedient? Was he the only one who was such and no one but

* * * * *

[753] Gen 25:1–4
[754] Rom 9:10–13
[755] Chrysostom means Paul says (to himself, as it were) or implies.
[756] Exod 32:19–30
[757] Rom 9:15

him? How did it happen, then, that he was punished so harshly? And finally, what about the Jews? He gave the name 'people' to those who were not his people.[758] And again why did he not grant the same honour to all? 'For if they be as the sands of the sea,' he says, 'a remnant shall be saved.'[759] And why only a remnant? You see in how many difficulties he has involved the subject he proposed. And he is quite right to do this. For whenever you can throw your opponent into inexplicable difficulties, do not immediately provide the solution. For if he too seems to be a victim of the same ignorance, why should you take any needless risk? Why render even more self-assured someone who takes everything upon himself?[760] Tell me, then, O Jew, you who bring up so many difficulties without being able to resolve them, how do you have the nerve to give us trouble about the calling of the gentiles? But in fact, I could certainly give you a just reason why the gentiles received justification: but you sought justification from the works of the Law, and by striving for it in that way you lost it completely. 'For not knowing God's justification and seeking to establish their own, they were not obedient to God's justification.'[761] So in this way that blessed soul anticipates the solution to the whole problem, putting everything in a nutshell.

But to make these points more clear, let us examine what is said point by point, keeping in mind St Paul's purpose here, namely to demonstrate through everything which was said that only God knows who is worthy and that no man does: even though someone may seem to be pre-eminently worthy, in such judgments one is frequently mistaken. But the one who knows the secrets of our minds knows for sure which of us are worthy of a crown, or which, on the other hand, are worthy of punishment and vengeance. Thus it happens that many whom men consider to be good are rebuked and punished by God, and, on the other hand, many who are considered to be evil are crowned by God, who declares them not to be such, giving sentence not by the opinion of the crowd but by his precise and incorruptible judgment, not waiting to perceive from the outcome of their behaviour who is evil or not. But not to make the discourse more obscure once more, let us turn to the words of the Apostle: 'Not only that, however, but also Rebecca was pregnant by one man.'[762] I could also have brought up, he says, the sons born of Keturah, but I say

* * * * *

[758] Rom 9:25, citing Hos 2:23

[759] Isa 10:22; Rom 9:27

[760] In modern Greek texts, the meaning is 'Why render him more self-assured by taking everything upon yourself?'

[761] Rom 10:3; cf Rom 9:30–2.

[762] Rom 9:10

nothing about them. But to go beyond what is needed to win the victory, I bring up those born of the same father and the same mother. For they were both born of Rebecca, and also of Isaac, the legitimate and approved son, who was elevated to an honour above all others and of whom it was said: 'Your seed will be called after Isaac,' who was the father of all of us.[763] But if he is our father, it must needs be that those begotten by him are our fathers. But they were not. You see how this happened not in the case of Abraham alone, but also in that of his son. And in every respect it is faith which confers splendour and signals relationship. For here we learn that sons are called his sons not solely from the manner of their birth but also from being worthy of the virtue of their progenitor. For if this happened only from the manner of birth, Esau should have received the same lot as Jacob; for he, too, came forth from a dead womb, and his mother was also sterile.

But this was not the only question here, but there was also the matter of character, which is not fortuitous and which contributes to the conduct of our lives. And he does not say that one was evil and the other was good and that therefore the one was raised up to honour, lest the Jews should immediately raise this objection against him: why, then, are those from among the gentiles good rather than those from among the circumcised? Though that was the truth of the matter, he does not explain it yet because it might seem to be somewhat harsh, but rather he reduces the whole matter to the secret plan of God, which no one would dare to oppose, no matter how extraordinarily mad he might be: for even before they were born, it was said to their mother, 'The elder shall serve the younger.'[764] For this was a case of foreknowledge: they were chosen from the same birth. In order, then, that it might be quite manifest that the choice of God, he says, was made out of foreknowledge, from the very first day he immediately saw which was good and which was evil, and he passed his sentence accordingly. Then do not tell me, he says, 'I have read the Law and the prophets; I have served for a very long time,' since the one who knows how to assay the mind also knows who is worthy of being saved. Yield, therefore, to the secret judgment of God's election, for only he knows how to judge precisely to whom he should give a crown. How many were there who seemed to be better than Matthew if you judge by the appearance of goodness that arises from works. But the one who knows our secrets and can examine a mind's aptitude and who recognized the pearl lying in the filth passed over the others and chose him, admiring his beauty, and by adding his own grace to Matthew's noble and prompt will he made him celebrated and

* * * * *

[763] Rom 9:7, slightly modified; cf Rom 4:16–17 and Gen 17:4–5.

[764] Rom 9:11–12

approved. For if, when they are presented with ephemeral books[765] and other similar things, those who have excellent judgment do not make their choice by the standards ordinarily accepted by uneducated people but rather by criteria of which they have a firm knowledge, and if it happens not infrequently that they reject what the mob approves and choose what the mob disapproves of, and if horse-tamers often do the same in choosing horses, and if the same applies to assayers of precious stones and other workmen, so much the less will God, who is good and immensely wise, who alone knows all things perfectly, put up with such a thing,[766] but rather he passes judgment on all things through his own wisdom, which is perfect and cannot be deceived; hence he chose a publican and a thief and a prostitute, but despised and rejected the priests, elders, and princes. We can see that the same thing happens among the martyrs: many of them who seemed thoroughly downcast won their crown at the time of the struggle; on the other hand, those whom the mob considered to be great were overthrown and fell. Therefore do not demand reasons from the creator, and do not say: Why is this one crowned and that one punished? He knows everything and his judgment is accurate, and therefore he says: 'I have loved Jacob but hated Esau.'[767] Quite justly so, because, although you indeed know things after the fact, he knows them with certainty before the event. For God is looking not only for a display of works but also for a noble promptitude and a mind that is tried and true. For if such a person should fall because of some occasional circumstance, he will easily recover himself. And if perchance he falls into a life of vice, he will not be neglected, but God, who knows everything, will swiftly call him back. On the other hand, a person whose mind is corrupt, even if he seems to being doing something good, will perish because he does it with bad intentions. Even David, though he committed both murder and adultery, quickly expiated his crimes because he committed them not with deliberate malice but was carried away by a special circumstance. The Pharisee, however, who did not dare to do any such things and was distinguished by other good qualities, lost all because of his bad intentions. 'What, then, shall we say? Is there any injustice in God? Far from it!'[768] Therefore that is also the case in what he did to us and to the Jews.

* * * * *

---

[765] The 1527 edition has *liberis*, which can only mean 'children' or 'freemen'; LB corrected to *libris* and is followed in the translation. Modern Greek texts have τεχνῶν 'arts' or 'crafts,' but Erasmus' text may have read τεκνῶν 'children.'

[766] That is, with imperfect judgment like that of the mob

[767] Rom 9:13; Mal 1:2–3

[768] Rom 9:14; for David's sins see 2 Kings 11:1–21; for the Pharisee, see Luke 18: 10–14.

After this Paul brings up something else even more evident[769] than this. What is that? 'For he said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy on, and I will pity whomever I will pity.'[770] Once more he strengthens the objection, dividing it in two and answering one part, while also creating a new difficulty. But I need to explain what I am saying to make it clearer. According to Paul, God said, 'The elder shall serve the younger,'[771] and he said this before their birth. What then? Is God unjust? Not at all. Listen, then, to what follows. For in that case the two were distinguished by virtue and vice, but here[772] all the Jews sinned in fashioning the calf. And yet some were punished; others were not censured. And therefore God said: 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy on, and I will pity whomever I will pity.' For it is not your part, O Moses, he says, to know who is worthy of kindness; but rather that belongs to me. And if it was not for Moses to know, even less is it so for us. For that is the reason Paul did not simply report what was said but also mentions to whom it was said. 'To Moses,' Paul says, 'God said,' namely to make the objector ashamed of himself because of the dignity of the person. And so when Paul had solved the difficulties, he made a break in the discourse, and once more brought in another objection, saying 'It does not depend on who wills or runs but on the mercy of God.'[773] Certainly Isaac wanted to bless Esau, who ran off to the fields to do what his father had commanded because he wanted the blessing. But in the meantime God brought in Jacob, who was worthy, and by a just judgment he made it clear that he was worthy of the blessing.[774] 'For Scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for this very purpose, to display my power in you and to spread my fame over the whole earth."'[775] Just as in the one case, he says, some were saved and others punished, so here too Pharaoh was reserved for this purpose. And then Paul brings in the objection: 'Therefore he has mercy on whom he wishes, and he hardens whom he wishes. And so you will say to me, "Why is he still complaining? Who resists his will?"'[776] You see how Paul strove to make the subject difficult[777]

* * * * *

[769] Erasmus apparently read σαφέστερον 'more evident', where modern texts have ἀσαφέστερον 'more obscure.'

[770] Rom 9:15, quoting Exod 33:19

[771] Rom 9:12

[772] That is, in the case of the Jews who made the golden calf; cf Exodus 32–3.

[773] Rom 9:16

[774] This and the preceding sentence are not in modern editions of the Greek.

[775] Rom 9:17, quoting Exod 9:16

[776] Rom 9:18–19

[777] The 1527 Latin text and LB have *explicabile* 'explicable,' but modern Greek editions have ἄπορον 'difficult, inexplicable.' It is possible that the Greek Erasmus

> in every possible way. And he does not provide a solution right away because he is acting for the good of those he is dealing with. And first of all, he shuts the mouth of the person who raised the question, saying to him, 'You, O man, who are you to answer back to God?'[778] He does this in order to curb importunate curiosity and to check an immoderate desire to ask questions, teaching them to know what God is and what mankind is and how his incomprehensible providence exceeds our understanding and that all ought to obey him, so that, after preparing his listener and restraining him and rendering his mind more malleable, he might finally bring in the solution without difficulty and make the listener easily accept what he says. And he does not say, 'These matters are insoluble.' What, then, does he say? He says it is irreverent to ask such questions. We ought to comply with what God does, not inquire curiously about it, even if we do not know why he does it. That is the reason he says, 'You, who are you to answer back hostilely to God?'[779] Do you see how he casts him down, how he daunts his inflated arrogance? 'You, who are you?' Do you share in his power? Is that the reason you sit in judgment of God? By comparison with him you are not able to be some one thing or another; you cannot be anything at all. For when he says, 'You, who are you?' he makes it much clearer that you are nothing than if he had said, 'You are nothing.' And in another way he expresses greater indignation by the question itself: 'to answer back hostilely to God?' that is, 'to contradict,' 'to oppose.' For to say 'it should be thus' or 'it should not be thus' indicates the speaker is ἀνταποκρινόμενος, that is, 'answering hostilely.' See how Paul frightens them, daunts them, makes them tremble instead of being curious or eager to ask questions. This is what an excellent teacher does; he does not give way to the desires of his students but bends them to his will in every respect, first pulling up the thorns, then sowing the seed, not answering immediately any and all questions they may ask.

These are not the words of Origen, that inept scriptural exegete, nor do they come from the sacrilegious mouth of Jerome, but from the golden mouth of Chrysostom.[780] And you can see that in this passage he completely

---

* * * * *

used had the error ἄπραγμον 'easy,' but since the context clearly requires 'inexplicable,' it is probable that the Latin text wrongly printed *explicabile* for *inexplicabile*, and I have so translated.

[778] Rom 9:20

[779] There is no parallel in the Latin Vulgate for the Greek word Erasmus translates here. See his *Annotations on Romans* CWE 56 263.

[780] 'Chrysostom' is an epithet meaning 'golden-mouthed.'

disagrees with Luther. Luther says that the purpose of the whole epistle is to show that mankind can do nothing at all, either for good or for evil, but that everything is borne along by sheer necessity and is accomplished at God's pleasure. Chrysostom completely rejects this purpose. Luther excludes all merit; Chrysostom posits two kinds: a character and mind capable of grace; and second, the merit of using grace well when it arrives. The rewards were destined and predicted for them before they were born, but this was done by one who knew what they would be like. Then Luther says that here the difficulty is resolved;[781] Chrysostom denies this, saying that the difficulty is brought in here to check the arrogance of an objector and to render him more docile.

Ambrose says the same thing in different language, distinguishing judgment from foreknowledge. He says that by his foreknowledge God pronounces what will happen, but he judges only by merits. I will transcribe his words: 'For by knowing what each of them would be like, he said: "The younger one will be worthy; the elder, unworthy." By his foreknowledge he chose one and spurned the other. And God's intent in the one he chose remained firm because the chosen one could not turn out otherwise than God foreknew and intended in him: that he be worthy of salvation. Similarly, in the one he spurned the intent he had for him remained firm because he would be unworthy.' I am well aware that Luther will seize upon this for his case. But let him listen to what follows, which makes it clear that merits are not excluded but precede grace. 'He did this,' Ambrose says, 'as one who foreknew, not as a respecter of persons. For he damns no one before he sins and crowns no one before he has won the victory.' Shortly thereafter, speaking of the Jews who envy the gentiles and persist in disbelief: 'Nevertheless, they were able to believe, as is clear from what comes later.' Once more, a bit later: 'But again, the pain is dulled because they themselves were the cause of their perdition. And so, foreknowing that their wills would be evil, God did not include them in the number of the good, although, etc.' And a bit further on: 'God judges according to justice, not according to foreknowledge.'[782] But Ambrose's commentary is accessible for anyone to look at. What Theophylact writes[783] agrees with Ambrose, as does the commentary falsely attributed to Jerome,[784] though, in fact, everything in it is learned or gathered from learned authors, except

* * * * *

[781] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 725:10–12 / LW 33 199

[782] *Commentaria in epistolam ad Romanos* (on Rom 9:11–13) PL 17 134–5

[783] *Expositio in epistolam ad Romanos* 9.11–13 PG 124 463–6

[784] Pseudo-Jerome *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos* 9.11–13 PL 30 688–9

the little preface which some fraudulent bookseller prefixed to it to make it more saleable. Only Augustine excludes foreknown merits as the reason why Jacob was chosen and Esau rejected, and his interpretation makes original sin the cause of the hatred.[785] For my part, Augustine is a man to whom anyone may grant as high a status as he likes; but I would never attribute so much to him as to think he sees further in Paul's epistles than the Greek interpreters. And yet however hostile to free will Augustine was after he declared war on Pelagius, he firmly asserts that free will exists,[786] although he professes that it cannot contribute very much to a good action. But let Luther imagine that this is my interpretation, for I prefer that he rage against me – let this be the limit of his abuse – than that he blaspheme against the Doctors of the church. Let him only consider whether it accords with the drift of the Apostle's discussion and the aim he had in mind. He desired to coax both the Jews and the gentiles to come to the grace of the gospel by the path available to all, namely through faith. For this purpose it was completely unsuitable to say that mankind can do nothing, either for good or for evil, but rather that those chosen by God would achieve salvation whether they wanted it or not and that those whom he did not choose would go to hell by sheer necessity.

What reason, then, does Luther have to be so exultant, so transported, so triumphant? 'What good,' he says, 'did free will do Jacob?' I say: because he made himself available to divine grace and did not turn away when God called him, he deserved to be dear to God. 'How,' he says, 'did it hinder Esau?' Because he turned away from God's grace, he was considered to be unworthy of the honour of the first-born. 'They had not yet done anything.' Surely it is a marvel if God, without waiting for their deeds, destines one person for honour and another for scorn, when physiognomists,[787] who judge character by conjectures, set one boy to the study of philosophy and designate another to be a soldier or farmer. 'This is the point,' he says, 'to which *Discussion* should have responded.'[788] Indeed, *Discussion* settled that

* * * * *

[785] *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* 2.7.15–16 CSEL 60 477:21–478:26; see also *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 3.7 PL 44 964–5

[786] For example in *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 1–3 PL 44 881–5

[787] Latin *physionomi*, which is not in the usual classical or medieval Latin dictionaries. It is perhaps surprising that Erasmus does not use the Latinized Greek form found in Cicero (*De fato* 5.10): '... physiognomon, qui se profitebatur hominum mores naturasque ex corpore, oculis, vultu, fronteque pernoscere' ('... a physiognomist, who claimed to know mens' characters and natures from their bodies, eyes, countenances, and brows').

[788] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 723:33–7 / LW 33 197

point quite clearly, but Luther has closed his ears like an asp and does not hear the spell of the wise enchanter.[789]

He had conceded that the text is dealing with the honour of lordship and the disgrace of slavery but denies that it matters.[790] If he sticks to this concession, it is not necessary to look for reasons in such matters. Cain was the first-born and Abel was subject to him; yet God did not invert the ranking, as he did with Jacob and Esau. But if Luther contends that here too we must look for the reason, I have already shown how God foreknew his character and his attitude of obedience to the will of God. Why did he call Jacob? Because he knew he would be worthy of this honour. Why did he destine Esau for slavery? Because he foreknew that he would abuse this honour even if he had been called to it. And lest anyone should think it is sufficient to be called, some who were called defected through their free will. Judas was called to the status of the ministry, but he fell away from that honour through his own malice. The seventy-two disciples were called,[791] and yet some of them abandoned the Lord.[792] Saul and Solomon were also of this sort. There is no forcing of Holy Scripture here, but Luther, it seems, without even rereading the passage in Paul, twists it by violent interpretations to fit his dogma. And to keep from ever agreeing with *Discussion*, he here takes back what he had conceded, denying that this passage applies only to the prerogative of higher honour, though, in fact, *Discussion* did not deny that it could be accommodated allegorically to justifying grace. For this is what *Discussion* says: 'But this statement does not properly refer to human salvation.'[793] Hence it is quite silly to boast so loudly that he will not allow that Paul be smirched by the calumnies of sacrilegious persons. He applies his tar-brush to the Doctors of the church, who were not less learned than they were pious.

* * * * *

[789] Ps 57:5–6. Augustine explains that to avoid being lured out of its den by the caster of spells, the asp presses one ear on the ground and sticks its tail into the other (*Enarrationes in psalmos* 57.7 CCSL 39 715:33–42). Punning on the title *Hyperaspistes*, Melanchthon and Luther had called Erasmus an asp (*Hyperaspistes* 1 CWE 76 96 n1); here he repays the compliment.

[790] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 723:19–20 / LW 33 197

[791] Luke 10:1; 'seventy-two' is the reading of the Vulgate; in *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* LB VI 271 Erasmus argues for 'seventy,' the reading of the Greek manuscripts.

[792] John 6:66

[793] *A Discussion* CWE 76 53; that is, saying that the statement does not literally apply to salvation does not deny that it can be accommodated to it. The 1527 edition and LB X 1436D wrongly extend the quotation to 'they were pious.'

But come now, how does he refute what *Discussion* says? 'In the prophecy,' he says, 'two peoples are clearly distinguished. One of them, though younger, is received into the grace of God so that it conquers the elder, not indeed through its own power but through the favour of God. Accordingly, not only external lordship or slavery is being treated here, but all things that pertain to the people of God, that is, blessing, the word, the Spirit, the promise of Christ, and the eternal kingdom, etc.'[794] That is what he says. *Discussion* also admits that this passage can be applied to these things by means of allegory. But if Luther thinks that the simple words of Scripture, about which he boasts so much, signify all these things and that Jacob and Esau do not signify two men but two peoples, one of which God favours and calls to grace, the other he excludes from grace, it is clear that the Jews, who crucified the Lord and to this very day crucify him by their blasphemies, were descendants of Jacob. On the other hand, it is clear that Job, a man so highly praised by God, was the grandson of Esau, since he was the fifth generation from Abraham.[795] There is also no doubt that Job had children resembling him and that there were very many others of that lineage who were pleasing to God, however one wishes to judge Esau himself. Augustine thinks that the passage refers to the Christians called from among the gentiles and to the Jews. The Jews now serve the Christians, the elder people serves the younger, but not all Jews perish and not all Christians are saved.[796] But the honour of the name[797] and the promise has been transferred to the Christians called from among the gentiles; the Jews, who used to dispense their bounty to others, must now seek it from us. And the Jews were not so much arguing about salvation as about the prerogative of honour. They were outraged that the gentiles were called to salvation without observing the Law, since they wanted to boast of the gentiles' flesh. And so Paul compares this case with a similar example, putting down the arrogance of the Jews and freeing the gentiles from the envy inspired by the transferred honour.

* * * * *

---

[794] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 724:6–18 / LW 33 198

[795] An appendix to the book of Job in the Septuagint translation identified Job with King Jobab of Edom. Jobab was the son of Zerah, son of Reuel, son of Esau, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, and hence was the fifth in the line of Abraham's descendants (Gen 36:10, 17, 33).

[796] Augustine *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum libri duo* 1.19 PL 40 124–5

[797] That is, of the name 'Jew,' which means 'confessing,' 'avowing the true religion'; see *Enarratio Psalmi 33* ASD V-3 110:598.

LB X 1436E

Where, then, is that sacrilegious opinion of *Discussion* and Jerome: 'The evidence in its own context does not offer the same support that it does in Paul'?[798] In fact, *Discussion* did not say this. What she said was: 'This evidence does not so much help to prove necessity as to put down the arrogance of the Jews.'[799] This sacrilegious opinion was approved by Chrysostom and all the orthodox Fathers, at least all the most learned among them. But this one little phrase 'offers support' gives him occasion to pour forth much futile abuse, and he does not notice what was being said. He neatly corrects what he dreams up as my statement, so that when I later say that the evidence offers stronger support in Paul than in its original context,[800] he claims it was spoken not only about Paul but also about all the apostles whenever they cite evidence from Scripture.[801] Thus Luther jumps from the frying pan into the fire.[802] For who is more sacrilegious: someone who thinks that Paul adapts scriptural texts keenly and adroitly to the confirmation of evangelical truth by taking passages which in their original context seem to be spoken straightforwardly and turning them into weapons to fight for the faith, as he did, for example, among the Athenians, when he took an inscription he happened to see on an altar as a testimony which proclaimed Christ.[803] The Greek rhetoricians carefully point out this technique as especially neat, namely to persuade that something should be done by showing that it already has been done. They give the example of exiles who had besieged and liberated their native city; their spokesman, acting to get them reinstated, denies that they are asking for anything new, for the exiles had already returned to their native city when they drove the enemy from the walls.[804] Thus Paul skilfully takes the inscription to the unknown

* * * * *

[798] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 724:17–19 / LW 33 198

[799] *A Discussion* CWE 76 53

[800] *A Discussion* CWE 76 54; cf 521 and n728 above.

[801] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 724:19–20 / LW 33 198

[802] Literally, 'to escape the smoke runs into the fire' (*Adagia* I v 5)

[803] Acts 17:23. Erasmus does not finish this thought by giving the unacceptable alternative until several sentences later, when he asks, 'Whose opinion, then, is more sacrilegious ...'?

[804] Erasmus refers to a technique described by Pseudo-Hermogenes in *On Invention* 1:4 ed Hugo Rabe (Leipzig 1913; repr Stuttgart 1979) 105. This work was a standard school text, available in numerous manuscripts and printed with other rhetorical works by Aldo Manuzio in 1508. The technique is called 'prooemia from kairos [occasion].' The relevant passage is as follows: 'Some people have been banished and have established another city, in which they live, on the boundaries of their native country. When a war befell those by whom they had been expelled, they went back to aid them, and someone

gods which had been added to the other pagan gods and turns it into an occasion to say that they were already worshipping the one he was preaching to them. Likewise what the poet said about Jupiter Paul turned to the true God: 'We are his offspring.'[805] I could point out some similar examples in the scriptural evidence cited by Paul, if that were the issue, which would clearly show the reader that there was good reason for the leading theologians among the ancients to say this. Whose opinion, then, is more sacrilegious: someone who says that Paul handles scriptural evidence adroitly, so that it seems to offer more support in Paul than in the original context from which it was taken, or someone who says that he displays little skill in making use of scriptural evidence, so that the texts are more banal when the Apostle uses them as arguments than they are in the prophet – which is what Luther affirms? According to the rhetoricians it makes a great deal of difference how you handle an argument. This point, then, was made to praise Paul, not to scorn him; but what Luther says is truly scornful not only of Paul but also of all the apostles.[806] And so, dear reader, you see how much paper Luther has wasted with empty words. And he hardly ceases doing so in the concluding sentence: 'But such things are fitting for those who are not seriously concerned about Scripture.'[807] Against whom does he say this? Against *Discussion*? She says nothing except that Paul handles this example of Esau and Jacob so as to provide very little support for Luther's dogma. And so he said it against Jerome. But it is irrelevant; he has simply gone out of his mind, and while he indicts Jerome for blasphemy against Paul alone, he himself hurls even more atrocious blasphemy against all the apostles.

Now to take up the testimony of Malachi: 'I loved Jacob but I hated Esau.'[808] Luther says that I distort this by means of three stratagems. First of all, 'God,' I say, 'is not affected by the same sort of love or hate as we are.'[809] He makes fun of this as if there were no reason to say it. Quite the contrary, since Luther allows nothing but the simple literal meaning, I show in

* * * * *

introduces a motion to restore them. Here we say, "It looks as though I am introducing a decree today to restore citizens, but in truth we already received them when we allowed them to come back as our allies."' (The annotator is very grateful to Professor George A. Kennedy for the information and the translation given here.) See also ASD V-4 39:602–3 and ASD V-5 409.

[805] Acts 17:28; see n549 above.

[806] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 724:15–21 / LW 333 198

[807] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 724:25–6 / LW 33 198

[808] Mal 1.2–3, quoted in Rom 9:13

[809] *A Discussion* CWE 76 53; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 724:28–30 / LW 33 198–9

passing that here we must accept a figure of speech willy-nilly. For according to ordinary usage, according to common sense, when we hear 'Socrates loves Alcibiades'[810] or 'Cicero hates Vatinius,'[811] we mean something different than when the same things are said of God. There is no reason here for Luther to take refuge in eternal love, since God himself is love. Without figurative language how will he extricate himself from eternal hatred? For God does not hate anything that he created, but rather he hates vice because he punishes sins, and he loves piety because he crowns the pious. Therefore Luther is ridiculous when he makes such a to-do here, saying 'What do I hear? Is the question now how God loves or hates rather than why he loves and hates?'[812] *Discussion* takes up that very question, but in passing she refutes the opinion that figurative language must be completely excluded. Jerome admonishes us that God is said to hate as if he had human feelings, just as he is said to weep, grieve, or be angry.[813] And so let Luther look to it whether what he says, 'God loves and hates in keeping with his eternal and immutable nature,'[814] is true without figurative language. But here too Luther will seize a weapon to kill off free will once and for all: 'If his hatred is eternal and immutable, as is his love, what is there for free will to do?'[815] Even if we grant him what he assumes, how does eternal love or hatred hinder free will any more than foreknowledge and eternal predestination? But if he grants that the language is figurative, so that love or hatred is taken as the honour a person has or the afflictions he suffers, what good is this weapon against me, since I am not talking about eternal love or hatred, but rather about the subject matter of temporal love and hatred? Thus God loved Saul when he commanded that he be anointed as king, but he hated the same man when he rejected him; he loved him when he was good, he hated him when he changed to someone different.[816] God himself is not different, but his actions in relation to external things vary, just as his awareness does. And so Luther presses me: 'Answer, tell me, how does Jacob merit love and Esau hatred before they are born and do any works?'[817] *Discussion* has already given a twofold response. First, in mat-

* * * * *

[810] Plato *Symposium* 213C–D

[811] A bitter enemy of Cicero, against whom he delivered the invective *In Vatinium testem interrogatio*

[812] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 724:30–1 / LW 33 199

[813] *Commentarii in Malachiam prophetam* 1.2–5 CCSL 76A 906:131–4

[814] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 724:32–4 / LW 33 199

[815] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 724:35–725:3 / LW 33 199.

[816] 1 Kings 10:1–8, 15:26

[817] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 725:10–12 / LW 33 199

ters that concern temporal advantages and disadvantages, we have no business inquiring about God's plan; for in such matters merit is not always considered, as, for example, we read about the blind man in the gospel who was born such not by any fault of his own or of his parents.[818] Second, if merit is also demanded here, *Discussion* has already responded that future merit is present to God: for God loves someone who will one day do a good work, no differently than we love someone who is doing or has done one.[819] And so Luther's inference is true: Paul rightly cites the testimony of Malachi. I grant it; indeed Paul was utterly right to do so. But it has no bearing on Luther's dogma.

He reveals a second trick of *Discussion*: that 'Malachi seems to be speaking not about the hatred which damns for all eternity, but rather about temporal affliction. For he is reprimanding those who wanted to build up Edom.'[820] So says *Discussion*. Here Luther is outraged: 'He says this once more to put Paul to shame, as if he were doing violence to Scripture. Thus we show no reverence for the majesty of the Holy Spirit as long as we make our own points.'[821] What shame is Luther grumbling about here? Imagine that Paul drew an allegory out of the literal story or by means of a simile adapted the story as a proof of a spiritual meaning. Is that to be immediately taken as doing violence to Scripture? Now I have made it clear that Paul is here dealing with the honour of the Jewish people, which was transferred to the gentiles, and Malachi is dealing with similar benefits. For when God had said, 'I loved Jacob and hated Esau,' the Israelites replied, 'In what way did you love us?' And the Lord reminded them of the benefits he had bestowed on them and denied to the Edomites.[822] Paul, then, agrees with the testimony of the prophet, but this agreement does nothing to promote Luther's dogma. 'Paul,' he says, 'proves from Malachi that that affliction was visited upon Esau without any merits and solely by God's hatred so as to make the point that there is no free will. This is the point where you are pressed. To this you should have responded.'[823] What is wrong with Luther? He demands what is ready at hand in *A Discussion*, as he himself soon admits, and still he scoffs as if there had been no reply. At the same time, he wrongly assumes that Esau did not deserve that affliction.

* * * * *

[818] John 9:1–3
[819] *A Discussion* CWE 76 53–4
[820] *A Discussion* CWE 76 53
[821] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 725:18–20 / LW 33 199–200
[822] Mal 1:1–4
[823] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 725:22–4 / LW 33 200

And if he did deserve it, we should not ask why, no more than why God lets one person be born alive and he lets another die in the cradle before he has any perception of life. But if matters of eternal salvation are at issue here, I have already responded concerning merit.[824] And even if I had not, Luther's bit of sophistry is still excluded because these matters are not brought up to solve the difficulty but to shut the mouths of the Jews who were murmuring against God because the gentiles had been admitted to the gospel. Moreover, since in this passage Jacob and Esau, even according to the grammatical sense, stand for the two peoples and since Esau corresponds to the rejected Jews and Jacob to the chosen gentiles, how is it consistent that the Jews should be said to be rejected for no other reason than God's eternal hatred, when he had earlier called them a beloved people?[825] Then too, how is it consistent that the Jews should be rejected through no fault of their own, since Paul openly professes that they were rejected because of disbelief, which was the reason for God's hatred? But to keep his discourse moving on, Luther says it is not true that Malachi means only temporal affliction here.[826] *Discussion* never said this; rather she said that Malachi was not properly speaking here about eternal salvation. Anyone who says this means the same thing as Luther, who confesses that the prophet means the temporal dimension but adds to it an allegorical sense. And yet *Discussion* undermines the whole meaning of the prophet; Luther utters the thunderbolts of God!

But let us listen to the proof he gives for his earlier pronouncement, asserting that all things are encompassed in the phrase 'I have loved.' And what on earth is his argument for it? 'Because in Genesis the blessing is mentioned.'[827] But according to the literal sense the blessing fits my opinion: 'May the Lord give you abundance of wine and oil from the dew of heaven and the fertility of the earth. May peoples serve you and tribes adore you. Be lord over your brothers, etc.'[828] You have a blessing which is quite crass if you exclude figurative language, as Luther professes he does in this passage. If he accepts an allegory, we do not disagree, except that the allegory offers no support for Luther's dogma. For St Jerome proves free will from the allegory of this passage, which Luther thinks puts an end to

* * * * *

[824] See n819 above.

[825] Mal 1:2

[826] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 725:28–9 / LW 33 200

[827] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 724:11–15 / LW 33 198. See also 537 above, where the same passage is cited.

[828] Gen 27:25–9

free will. For Jerome says as follows: 'The Lord answered that Esau and Jacob were born of a single stock, that is, virtues and vices come from the single fountain of the heart as we exercise our free will to incline to either side according to our wishes, etc.'[829] But let us hear how Luther refutes the words of *Discussion*: 'The prophet,' he says, 'indicates what he means in very clear words. What is that? He reproaches the Israelites for their ingratitude because, though God loved them, they neither loved him in return as their father nor feared him as their Lord. And he proves that he loved them both by Scripture and by his acts, that is, because, although Jacob and Esau were brothers, as Moses writes in Genesis 25, nevertheless God loved and chose Jacob before he was born, while he hated Esau so much that he reduced his territory to a wilderness. Then, too, he hated him with such persistence and thoroughness that, when he brought Jacob back from captivity and restored him, he still did not allow the Edomites to be restored, but if they so much as say that they want to build he threatens them with destruction. If this is not what the very text of the prophet clearly says, may the whole world blame me for saying so.'[830] This is what he says. I grant that these are the words of the prophet. But what then? Up to this point everything favours my case. 'Therefore it is not the temerity of the Edomites that is reprimanded here but rather the ingratitude of the sons of Jacob,'[831] says Luther. A strange kind of reasoning indeed! Malachi reproaches the Israelites; therefore he does not condemn the temerity of the Edomites. Quite the contrary, he gives a black mark to both peoples: to the one because they strove to be restored after being rejected by God; to the other because, after they were restored, they acted in such a way as to deserve to be rejected. The phrase which Jerome translated as 'but if Edom says' is translated in the Septuagint as 'because Edom will say.'[832] And besides it is probable that Edom did make an effort to be restored.

But this point is not germane to the issue at hand. What was to be proved was that the prophet was speaking about the reason for eternal salvation; this is what we are looking for. 'How will it now be established,' he says, 'that the prophet is speaking about temporal affliction?' What is this that I hear? To be reduced to a wilderness is not a temporal affliction? And where is the law by which he refused to admit any figurative language unless we are forced to do so by an evident absurdity? But we will forgive

* * * * *

[829] *Commentarii in Malachiam prophetam* 1.2–5 CCSL 76A 905:111–906:114
[830] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 725:31–726:1 / LW 33 200
[831] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 726:2–3 / LW 33 200–1
[832] Mal 1:4

Luther for this thoughtless slip of the tongue. Let us listen to the rest: 'when he testifies,' says Luther, 'in very clear language that he is speaking about two peoples born of two patriarchs, the one accepted as a people and saved, the other abandoned and finally destroyed. But to accept as a people and not to accept as a people is not concerned with temporal good or evil only, but with all things, etc.'[833] If he is sober, what is Luther about here? Does he mean that the people of Israel, through God's eternal love, were constantly honoured both with temporal benefits and the reward of eternal salvation, whereas the other people through his eternal and ineluctable hatred were constantly afflicted both by troubles in this life and punishment in hell? But it is clear that many of the posterity of Esau were pious and that very many of the Israelites were wicked and that they also had no lack of frequent afflictions. The point is not whether God is the God who gives all benefits but rather what kind of things the passage is talking about: if it is about the honour of election, there is no difficulty; if it is about the process of salvation, the Edomites were also permitted to embrace and keep the Law, nor were all the Israelites saved. Therefore, if we insist on the literal meaning with no figurative language, God neither hates nor loves either people in an unqualified way; if we insist on allegory, there are Israelites among all nations, and Edomites also.

He recounts the third artifice (or assiduity, as he puts it) which *Discussion* uses to distort the passage, but he reports it wrongly.[834] Therefore it will be worthwhile to quote the words of *Discussion*:

> Furthermore, as far as the tropological sense is concerned, God has not loved all the gentiles or hated all the Jews: he has chosen some from each people, so that, as used by Paul, this evidence does not so much serve as a proof of necessity but rather to refute the arrogance of the Jews, who thought that the grace of the gospel belonged exclusively to them, because they were the posterity of Abraham, and abhorred the gentiles, refusing to tolerate their admission to a share in that gospel grace. A little later Paul explains this, saying 'he has also called not only from among the Jews.' But since God, when he hates or loves, does so for just reasons, his hatred or love are not more of an impediment to free will when he directs them to the unborn than when he directs them to those already born. He hates those not yet born because he knows for sure that they will do things deserving of hatred; he hates those already born because they are committing things deserving of hatred. The

* * * * *

[833] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 726:4–9 / LW 33 201
[834] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 726:14–22 / LW 33 201

> Jews, who were the beloved people, have been rejected; and the gentiles, who were not a people, have been accepted. Why were the Jews lopped off the olive tree? Because they refused to believe. Why were the gentiles grafted on? Because they were obedient to the gospel. Paul himself cites the reason: 'It was for lack of faith that they were broken off,' he says; just so, because they refused to believe. He both inspires those who have been lopped off with the hope of being grafted on again if they will abandon their disbelief and believe, and he also instils into those who have been grafted on the fear of being lopped off if they turn away from God's grace, etc.[835] These sentences undoubtedly make it clear that Paul in that passage is repressing the arrogance both of the Jews and of the gentiles.[836]

Although *A Discussion* contains this passage, Luther keeps crying out that there is no answer but only a subterfuge to avoid the substance of the question. First of all, Luther changes *Discussion*'s 'do not so much serve as a proof' to 'are not a proof at all,' and from the phrase 'serve as a proof' wrongly understood he slanders me for blaspheming against Paul. And then, by showing that Paul here is not making pronouncements but only proposing difficulties in order to check the arrogance of the Jews, who call God to account as if they were his equals, do I not overthrow the whole battleline of Luther's argument? But I have shown that this is the case from the judgment of the most reputable Doctors; I have shown it from the logic of the passage itself. Furthermore, I have shown that in those matters which do not specifically promote or hinder salvation, we should not demand reasons. And if a reason ought to be demanded, I taught that God either loves or hates for just reasons, though they are unknown to us. As for the fact that God proclaimed his love and hatred before they were born, that is inferred not from Malachi but from Genesis, where it is not said 'I hate the one and love the other,' but rather 'The elder shall serve the younger,'[837] words that clearly do not speak about eternal salvation but about temporal advantages. And God kept the promise he made at that time. The glory of the covenant was delivered to Israel, not at all to the Edomites. Thus Malachi is not concerned with those not yet born, but he is demonstrating the ingratitude of the Israelites for the benefits they had received. But Malachi agrees with the prophecy in that he recounts temporal benefits and troubles, namely

* * * * *

[835] Erasmus omits the words from Rom 11:20 and 25, quoted here in *A Discussion*, to which the next sentence refers.

[836] *A Discussion* CWE 76 53–4

[837] Mal 1:2–3; Gen 25:23

the prosperity and restoration of Judaea and the complete overthrow and desolation of Edom.

But if someone wants to take these texts allegorically as applying to the calling of the gospel, so that the hated Esau designates the Jews who were rejected from the grace of the gospel and the loved Jacob refers to the gentiles who were called to it, two difficulties hinder such an interpretation: on the one hand, some were accepted and some were rejected from both nations, so that neither the one nor the other seems to have been hated or loved without exception; on the other hand, though we grant that the gentiles were called to the gospel through no merits of their own, certainly the Jews were withdrawn from grace for very serious and very just reasons. But if we interpret Jacob to mean those who believe in the gospel, Esau as those who do not, whether they be from either of the two peoples or from all peoples, clearly we are departing from Paul's concern here. But Luther says he see no figurative language here, since the words of the prophet are quite clear. I also do not take refuge in figurative language here: but just as Malachi clearly mentions temporal benefits, so I also grant that when Paul cites the text as an example it has the same meaning. But he does not use this citation to assert the necessity of all things – which Luther so often foists upon it – but rather to shut the mouths of those who murmur irreverently. The pre-eminence of the gospel was transferred from the Jews to the gentiles. Why not, since God once did the same thing with Jacob and Esau? What the Jews approved at that time now sticks in their throats, though the same God acted in both cases, bestowing the pre-eminence on whomever he wishes and taking it away from whomever he wishes. These events did not happen by chance: they were done according to God's secret plan. To pry into his reason for it bespeaks excessive curiosity; to rail against it is wicked. He knows the reasons why he acted in this way. Since drunken *Discussion* explained these points – somewhat concisely, it is true, but to the same effect – why is Luther so silly about it? 'I'll be damned if *Discussion* herself knows what she is talking about. But perhaps there is a rhetorical device here, showing how to obscure the meaning whenever there is some pressing danger that you will be trapped by some wording.'[838] Let Luther be damned if he wants; *Discussion*'s meaning agrees with that of the most reputable Doctors of the church. Only rarely will I rub this fellow's nonsense raw; I overlook all of it except when it is so flagrantly relevant that those who have sworn total allegiance completely to Luther's writings,

* * * * *

[838] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 726:22–4 / LW 33 202

swallowing them whole, as they say,[839] may see what a disordered spirit they have committed themselves to.

But let us proceed. 'We know,' he says, 'that they are grafted in by faith, lopped off by disbelief. But from this it does not follow that they are able to believe or not to believe by the power of free will, which is the issue we are dealing with.'[840] What Luther now denies he partly conceded before. Not to believe is, I think, an evil deed, and he professed that free will has the capacity to do what is evil.[841] But as for me, I agree with all the orthodox teachers that by means of free will a person can turn away from the grace offered to him, can withdraw from it once he has accepted it, and again by means of free will he can make himself available to impelling grace or turn away from it. And among those teachers some dare to attribute even more to free will. But he presses me: 'By what merit do they attain to faith?'[842] I reply: How does it happen that the seed sown on one sort of soil vanishes or deteriorates into weeds, but brings forth a good crop when it is sown on another kind of soil? How does it happen that when the gospel is offered to all, some are converted, others become more corrupt? Earlier wickedness is the reason they spurn grace when it is offered, or a sincere mind causes them to embrace what is offered. This rationale applies to both Jews and gentiles, except that the wickedness of the Jews is more inexcusable. Luther has what he demanded, a description of the merit, which a person can still not claim as if it came from him. Let the language in this passage have a general application; I except extreme and unusual callings:[843] there is nothing God cannot do if he wishes. So Luther's inference here that Paul is teaching that no one acquires faith by his own work but only by the love and hatred of God[844] is utterly false. Quite the contrary, only God loves or hates everyone for just reasons. And that he is said to love or hate those not yet born presents no difficulty. All things are present to him, nor is it any more absurd for him

* * * * *

[839] Literally, 'approving everything with a white ruler'; in *Adagia* I v 88 Erasmus explains that this means to accept everything indiscriminately.

[840] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 726:28–31 / LW 33 202

[841] Luther in his criticism of Erasmus' definition of free will (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 667–71 / LW 33 112–17) says: 'For when a man has lost his liberty and is forced to serve sin and cannot will good, what can be more truly inferred about him than that he sins, or wills evil, necessarily?' (117).

[842] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 726:33–5 / LW 33 202

[843] Like Paul's calling, for example. But *vocationes* may be an error for *vacationes* 'exemptions,' which would also fit the context.

[844] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 727:35–6 / LW 33 202

to love someone not yet begotten than it is for a human being to love someone who has fully deserved it. Now as for Paul's exhortation that those grafted in should not be lopped off, from which I concluded that by his own fault a person can lose the grace he has accepted, Luther sings us his old refrain that words of exhortation do not prove 'what we can do but what we ought to do.'[845] Who among orthodox teachers ever dreamed of such a piece of sophistry? No one, but rather Lady Grammar handed him this extraordinary weapon. But I have already shown time and again that even the grammarians understand in accordance with common sense that if a prudent and upright man exhorts someone else to do something, it is not completely impossible. You see how beautifully Luther conducts himself at this point, where he nevertheless does not leave off without an ovation.[846]

[*The meaning of the potter and the clay*]

Just as auspiciously he takes up the text about the clay and the potter,[847] and lo, on the very threshold he bumps up against a heinous offence. *Discussion* said, 'These texts offer more support in Paul than they do in the prophets from whom they are taken.'[848] 'She reviles Paul,' says Luther, 'for heedlessness and ignorance.'[849] Quite the contrary, I praise Paul's dexterity in handling scriptural texts. And then, as for Luther's denial that Paul borrowed these texts from the prophets, even though the interpreters point it out and the places correspond, I will not put up much of an argument against him, even though his argument in its favour is frivolous, namely that Paul habitually identifies his scriptural sources;[850] in fact, soon afterwards, in chapter 11, he quotes a scriptural text without identifying it: 'Who knows the mind of the Lord? Who has been his counsellor? etc.'[851] That is how near the text is that can refute Luther! What was the point of *Discussion*'s expending any effort to prove something that is so clear on the face of it and that is accepted and handed down by the most learned Doctors of the church? But at the same time I am surprised that Luther thought that

* * * * *

[845] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 726:37–8 / LW 33 202

[846] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 726:38–727:2 / LW 33 202; on 'ovation' see n142 above.

[847] Rom 9:20–1

[848] *A Discussion* CWE 76 54; the prophetic texts are Isa 45:9 and Jer 18:6, cited by Paul; cf 521 and n728, 538 above.

[849] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 727:8–9 / LW 33 203

[850] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 727:9–12 / LW 33 203

[851] Rom 11:34, citing Isa 40:13

this notion would do him any good. Was it because he saw that the prophet was dealing with temporal affliction? What then? That is not far from what the Apostle meant. For he was dealing with the temporal punishment of the Jews who resisted the gospel. And Paul had no other reason for bringing in these texts. For he is not talking about the reasons why some of the Jews did not believe the gospel but why they were punished in such a fashion, whereas God does not punish many wicked persons in the same way, just as, on the other hand, he wants the piety of some to be the object of worldly fame and honour, whereas he does not want the piety of others to be so. In so far as these temporal matters are concerned, the whole Jewish people was deprived of their honour; Rome, once the worshipper of idols and demons, succeeded to the place of the renowned Jerusalem, once the principal seat of religion; the gentile people rules, the Jewish nation goes into servitude and exile. This is what the Jews were complaining about, for by that time it had already begun to happen; that is what Paul was dealing with. For afterwards in chapter 11 he makes it clear that he is not talking about eternal rejection: 'Did God reject his people? Far from it, etc.'[852] But Luther concedes that the prophets are speaking about temporal affliction, 'so as not to spend so much time on irrelevant questions.'[853] Such courtesy! To be sure, he is in the habit of giving up some of his rights, but for that very reason he planned ahead of time to say that Paul produced this simile of the potter and his clay by his own spirit so that he would not be forced to admit that Paul also is dealing with temporal troubles, in which case the passage does nothing to undermine free will. But at this juncture, where does this unusual stinginess with time come from, causing him to begrudge spending time on irrelevant questions, since in this whole book he wastes more than half his time in jeers, insults, and witless witticisms? Moreover, if Luther grants that the prophet is speaking about temporal troubles, and if it is true that Paul by his own spirit adapts these to free will, is he not admitting something that a little before he cried out against as sacrilegious, namely that the texts offer more support in Paul than they do in the prophets?

In fact, his assumption that Paul is adapting these texts in order to apply them to free will is false: he uses them to repress the insolence of the Jews, just as in the gospel the Lord does not answer the irreverent trick questions of the Pharisees but puts them down with another question.[854] Therefore Luther ought to see what he claims he does not see: what the

* * * * *

[852] Rom 11:1
[853] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 727:18–19 / LW 33 203
[854] For example, Matt 22:17–21

point was of mentioning the potter and his clay, if it is not directed at undermining free will. 'Temporal afflictions and prosperity come to us from God whether we wish them or not.' I grant it. 'Therefore free will is undermined if we are to God what the clay is to the potter.'[855] I grant that we can do even less against God than the clay against the potter. For the clay is clay, whether the potter wishes it or not: it can be shaped in one way or another, but it is not in the power of the potter to make it not be what it is. God can turn a person into whatever he wants; he can reduce him to nothingness. But I do not posit free will in such matters, although many of our troubles befall us because of our own thoughtlessness. But we are not dealing with such matters now; we are dealing with the matter of salvation, where we are still, according to Luther's opinion, no more to God than the clay is to the potter, if God wills it so. But such was not his pleasure: in this scheme he wanted there to be a place for free will, either for the continuance of piety or for the imputation of wickedness. Nevertheless, to those who murmur hatefully a king would reply: 'Why do you contend with me as if you were on an equal footing, demanding the reason why I honour some and degrade others? I am the king; it is mine to decide, yours to obey.' Even a good king would reply thus to a rebellious people under those circumstances, though he might not say the same to those who inquired reverently. And it does not follow from such a statement by the king that he has no standards in honouring and rejecting, in preserving and destroying, other than his own pleasure. God's will has reasons which are both just and fair. But lest Luther should cry out that I am making the prophecy up out of my own head, I will not present Origen or Jerome, whom he scorns, but rather Chrysostom. Meantime I must beg my reader's patience for this little delay in the argumentation. I will give a trustworthy translation of Chrysostom's Greek[856] into Latin:

> 'Can the pot say to the one who made it, "Why did you make me so?" Does not the potter have the power to make two vessels from the same mass, one for honourable use, the other for lowly uses?' He does not say these things here to take away free will, but he shows how far we should go in obeying God. For it is not fitting to demand reasons from God or to feel any different than the clay. For we should not only not contradict or inquire but not even open our mouths at all or think about it, but should be like the inanimate matter that

---

* * * * *

[855] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 727:20–4 / LW 33 203.
[856] *Commentarius in epistolam ad Romanos* 16.7–8 PG 60 59–60

yields to the hands of the potter who turns it round and shapes it as he wishes. For that was the only reason the Apostle chose this example, not to reveal how God administers human affairs but to show that we should be subject to him and obey him submissively and silently. And certainly it is generally fitting to respect the principle that when similes are employed not every feature should be taken to apply, but we should single out only what is useful in them and applicable to the purpose for which they are employed; omit everything else. For example, if someone says, 'Lying down, he slept like a lion,'[857] we should single out that he is invincible and formidable, not that he is cruel or has any other traits inherent in lions. And again, if someone says, 'I will run after them like a she-bear whose cubs have been snatched away,'[858] we should single out vengeance. Likewise, when someone says, 'Our God is like a consuming fire,'[859] we should single out the power to destroy, which is seen when he punishes. In this passage we should take the clay and the potter and the vessels in a similar way. And when Paul interjects, 'Does the potter not have the power to make two vessels from the same clay, one for honourable use, the other for lowly uses?'[860] do not think that he said this concerning the nature of our condition or about the imposition of necessity on the human mind, but rather about God's power to dispense things in various ways. For if you do not take the text in this way, many absurdities will follow from it. For if he is here dealing with the mind and with good and evil deeds, it follows both that mankind will seem to be a stranger to any and all sins and that Paul, who never fails to crown the will, will seem inconsistent with himself. Thus he has no purpose here except to persuade his listeners to be obedient to God in every way and never to demand reasons from him. Just as a potter, he says, makes what he wants and no one contradicts him, so too God, choosing from the same genus of mankind, honours some and punishes others. Do not be over-curious, do not pry, but only adore, and imitate the clay, and just as it follows the hands of the potter, so you, too, should obey the will of the one who deals out these lots. For he does nothing in the ordinary way or by chance, even if the inner secrets of his wisdom remain hidden from you. But you allow the potter to shape different pots from the same mass, and you do not reproach him; from God, on the other hand, you demand the reason why he punishes some and honours others, and you do not concede that he knows

* * * * *

[857] Num 24:9
[858] Hos 13:8
[859] Deut 4:24; Heb 12:29
[860] Rom 9:21

> who is worthy and who is not; but because the whole mass is of the same nature, you want all the wills to be also the same. This is clearly a stupid idea! But in fact, even for the potter the honour or the lowliness does not arise from the same mass but from the use to which the pots are put when they are taken in hand, just as here too it comes from the intention of the mind, except that (as I began to say) we ought to take the simile to mean that we should not contradict God but should yield to his unfathomable providence. Indeed, examples ought to be more forceful than what they illustrate,[861] for if they are they have a greater effect on the listener. For if the example were not more forceful and did not strikingly surpass its object, it could by no means achieve the effect it should have and would not put the objecters to shame. By this means, then, he silences their importunate strife by employing a suitable hyperbole, but then he adds the solution.

Thus far I have quoted Chrysostom's words. How much good they do for Luther's dogma I do not know. Or rather I know very well! But certainly they do this much good: they keep him from bawling out that I distort Scripture according to what I have dreamed up out of my own head.

It remains for Luther to jeer at the argument of *Discussion* but by the same endeavour to mock the holy Doctors of the church. 'She proposes,' he says, 'two absurd notions; she infers one from Scripture and the other from reason. This is her inference from Scripture: Paul in 2 Timothy 2[:20–1] writes, "In a great house there are vessels of gold, silver, wood, earthenware, some for honourable, some for ignoble uses," and he adds, "If someone purifies himself of the others, he will be a vessel for honourable uses, etc." Then *Discussion* argues thus: "What could be more stupid than to say to a Samian chamberpot, 'If you cleanse yourself you will be an honourable vessel'?[862] But it is correct to say this to a rational earthenware pot which could take the advice and conform itself to the Lord's will." By this she means to say that the simile does not match at all points.' Up to this point Luther tells no lies, but what he adds is false: 'and it is so deceptive as to be completely ineffective.'[863] If something contributes to the purpose for which it was employed, namely to repress the wicked murmuring of mankind, is it completely ineffective? But for Luther's purposes it is completely ineffective if it does not undermine free will. Responding to this point, he informs

* * * * *

[861] That is, the inactivity of the clay is greater than that of human beings, who have the power to choose

[862] Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 54 n245, 55 n250.

[863] *A Discussion* CWE 76 55; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 727:26–34 / LW 33 204

us by the by that Paul did not say 'if someone cleanses himself from filth,' but rather 'from these,' that is, 'from vessels of ignominy,'[864] although *Discussion* does not make any mention of filth, nor does it make any difference for the question at hand whether the cleansed vessel withdraws from the company of the rest or cleanses itself, except that the last interpretation weighs more heavily against Luther; for it is not withdrawn from the vessels of ignominy without being cleansed of filth, and to be withdrawn is the same thing as being cleansed.

Here once more Luther courteously grants me something, but truly I do not have a clear idea of what it is. 'Let us also grant,' he says, 'that this passage in Paul does exactly what *Discussion* wants, that the simile is not effective, how will she prove that Paul means the same thing in the place in Romans 9 about which we are debating? Is it enough to cite another place and pay no attention at all to whether it makes the same point or a different one?'[865] Who said the simile is not effective? Quite the contrary, I showed that it is effective, though I denied that it was at all effective in proving Luther's dogma. But what is the point in Paul about which we are debating? Does it have anything to do with free will? I made it clear that Paul is not dealing with it, and I showed what he is dealing with and that what he either says or cites is applicable to what he is dealing with; and I showed this from the most reputable authorities, from the context and drift of the language, from a comparison with other texts, if we reject human authority. What, then, is Luther driving at when he exploits a commonplace[866] to declaim against comparing texts, which everyone grants is the most reliable method of interpreting Scripture? He says: 'Is it enough to cite another place and pay no attention at all to whether it makes the same point or a different one? Nothing is an easier or more common error in interpreting Scripture than to fit together different texts from Scripture as if they were similar, as I have often shown, so that the similarity of the texts, of which *Discussion* is so proud, is less effective than my simile, which she confutes.'[867] What is the

* * * * *

[864] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 727:35–728:1 / LW 33 204

[865] That is, to use 2 Tim 2:20–1 to illustrate Rom 9:21; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 728:3–6 / LW 33 204

[866] A 'commonplace' (*locus communis*) is an argument that can be adapted to either side in a dispute; see 448 above. Here the commonplace is the idea that similar texts in different places may have quite different meanings.

[867] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 728:5–9 / LW 33 204; Luther means that the simile of the potter and the clay is more effective if taken in his sense (that God moulds humans as the potter the clay) as rejecting free will than it is if it is interpreted by analogy with 2 Tim 2:20–1 so as to confute or reject Luther's notion of the

effect of these words of Luther but that whenever he compares similar texts everything matches to a T,[868] but whenever his opponent does so, he is talking sheer nonsense! Otherwise, how is this commonplace more valid against us, that is, against the orthodox, than against him? Certainly it is more likely that Luther, who is championing a disputed doctrine, should gather texts from everywhere and distort them to win the victory, than that we, who follow the opinion accepted and approved by the church from the very beginning, should do so. He grants, it is quite true, that a simile does not correspond in every respect. But he generously grants that Paul was dealing with the same point when he wrote to the Romans and to Timothy.[869] Who said this? *Discussion* did not; rather she brought up the text to show that the simile of the clay and the potter is not relevant to free will but rather to checking someone's inappropriate contradiction. Nothing is generously granted here because we do not agree about what Paul is dealing with.

But to show that the text cited from the Epistle to Timothy does not match this text, he prefaces his remarks with another commonplace, that one should cite Scripture according to the reason for the simile, not according to the words. Then he invents a reason and goes right on to distinguish between doctrine and exhortation.[870] He uses such verbal trickery to escape and at the same time he is speaking the thunderbolts of God! But I will not allow the simple reader to be deceived by such smokescreens. In the Epistle to the Romans Paul's purpose is to call the Jews away from their trust in the Law and to invite both the gentiles and the Jews to believe in the gospel. In the Epistle to Timothy his purpose is to exhort Christians to avoid heretics who teach doctrines divergent from the gospel as if they were from the gospel, and he does not think that the foundation of the faith is crumbling simply because some people depart from the purity of the gospel. For the Lord knew that they would be found wanting; nor is it surprising that in a large house vessels made for ignoble uses should be tolerated. For I am not concerned about whether you interpret the large house as the world, in which there are unbelievers and heretics, or as the church, which frequently tolerates heretics. The disbelief of deserters does not hinder the faith of those who stand firm, indeed it makes it shine brighter; as

* * * * *

simile. The 1527 edition has *magis efficax*, which should be corrected to *magis inefficax*, and *quae confutat*, which should be corrected to conform to Luther's *quam confutat*.

[868] Literally, 'measured by the ruler' (*Adagia* I v 90)

[869] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 728:9–12 / LW 33 204

[870] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 728:14–22 / LW 33 205

he says elsewhere, 'It is necessary that there be heresies.'[871] Such vessels, then, have their use in a great house: that is, God uses the disbelief of others to test the faithful. Nevertheless, the Apostle warns against keeping company with them, and to make that easier, he gives their names in the same passage.[872] Moreover, if someone has been somewhat led astray by contact with them, he admonishes him to abandon his error and depart from them, so that he will not be a vessel of ignominy like them but rather an honourable vessel, prepared for the Lord for every sort of use. And Theophylact, following, no doubt, Chrysostom and other older Fathers, adapts this passage to the proof of free will. For Judas, who was a vessel of gold, became an earthenware vessel; on the other hand, Paul, who was an earthenware vessel, became a golden one.[873] For someone who has had no contact with filth cannot be said to cleanse himself, and 'He will be sanctified as an honourable vessel' is not said of someone who is unblemished. Also this passage fits in with other texts. What he says in the passage, 'God's foundation stands firm, having this seal, "The Lord knows his own,"'[874] he clarifies here: 'If the number of the sons of Israel were like the sands of the sea, a remnant of them shall be saved';[875] and earlier, 'Not that the word of God has failed';[876] and again, 'Seven thousand men are left me who have not bent their knees to Baal';[877] and likewise in chapter 3, 'Shall their faithlessness invalidate the faithfulness of God?'[878] What he wrote to Timothy, 'if they cleanse themselves,' he clarifies in Romans, as follows: 'But those who do not persist in disbelief will also be grafted in; for God has the power to graft them in once more.'[879] This is a straightforward interpretation based on the drift of the passage itself.

Let us now listen to Luther's distortion. 'Since so many abandon the faith,' he says, 'we have no consolation except that we are certain that "God's foundation stands firm, having this seal, etc." And so Paul gives the reason: that the Lord knows his own. Then the simile follows: "Indeed there are different vessels, some for honourable use, some for ignoble uses." Here

* * * * *

[871] 1 Cor 11:19
[872] 2 Tim 2:16–17
[873] Theophylact *Commentarius in secundam epistolam ad Timotheum* (on 2 Tim 2:21) PG 125 111
[874] 2 Tim 2:19
[875] Rom 9:27, citing Isa 10:22
[876] Rom 9:6
[877] Rom 11:4; cf 3 Kings 19:18.
[878] Rom 3:3
[879] 2 Tim 2:21; Rom 11:23

LB X 1445C

the doctrine,' he says, 'is completed.' What doctrine? 'that the vessels do not prepare themselves but rather the master prepares them.' I hear a doctrine, but whose? Not Paul's but Luther's: 'In a great house there are different vessels, that is, the master himself prepares both the good and the bad.'[880] Once more he demands that the simile match in all respects. Quite the contrary, Paul means that the wealthy father of the family uses all vessels for the good of his household, the gold ones for honourable uses, those made of earthenware for squalid tasks, just as in the world he tolerates the wicked and the heretical so that the good can exercise their piety. 'This,' he says 'is also what he means in Romans 9, that the potter has power, etc. So Paul's simile stands firm, showing very effectively that free will has no existence in the sight of God.'[881] Certainly I expected Luther to give different reasons for the similes to be found in Paul when he writes to Timothy and when he writes to the Romans; he now gives the same reason for both. But I have already shown that this was not the reason in the Epistle to the Romans, and it is clear on the face of it that Luther distorts this text also, since when Paul writes to Timothy his subject is avoiding heretics and the foundation of unshakeable faith. Nor is it any wonder that from his fictitious reason Luther produces false doctrine. 'After this follows an exhortation: "if anyone cleanses himself of them."' And here he sings his old refrain that imperative, subjunctive, and optative expressions do not imply any facts, even if you should pile up a million such expressions: 'Therefore the words "if he cleanses himself" either do not support free will or, if they prove anything, they prove that free will can cleanse itself without grace.'[882] What a splendid inference Luther makes, leaving no middle ground between 'free will does not exist' and 'free will on its own can do whatever it wants without the assistance of grace.' I have made it clear enough elsewhere what power free will has. For the time being it is enough for me that the words 'if he cleanses himself,' according to the common understanding of grammarians and farmers and sailors and kitchen-gardeners, mean that the human will can do something. He adds a flourish to this section: 'If this evasion is valid, the whole discussion is meaningless. For it would be pointless to bring in murmurers against God as potter, if the guilt is seen to lie with the vessels and not the potter. For who would murmur if he hears that someone worthy of damnation is damned?'[883] With such nonsense Luther

* * * * *

[880] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 728:23–9 / LW 33 205
[881] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 728:29–31 / LW 33 205
[882] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 728:32–4 / LW 33 205
[883] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 728:31–729:6 / LW 33 205–6

fills his miserable sheets of paper, and I hardly know whether he indulges in deliberate delirium to wear out the reader or a future respondent. First of all, I showed that this simile was introduced to repress the murmur of the wicked – which Luther conveniently overlooks. Then, what does Luther mean? That God as the potter is at fault, not the vessels? For that is what his words actually say. These words were said by Paul. Did he mean that the destruction of many was to be attributed to God? Therefore those not worthy of damnation are damned, and the wicked have good reason to murmur. Finally, why did *Discussion* bring in the passage from the Epistle to Timothy? Was it not to show that the simile of the clay and the potter does not match in all points but only in the point it was brought in to make? What was that? That a creature should not murmur against the creator. The words 'if a vessel cleanses itself' certainly prove this.[884] And so what a spate of useless verbiage Luther has spewed out!

After handling these points felicitously, he wanders far afield railing at wretched *Discussion* with amazing vehemence because, as she tried to show what Luther himself confesses to be true, namely that there is no need for a simile to match at all points, she pointed out that the comparison of the clay and the potter does not match insofar as a defect in the vessel is attributed only to the potter, whereas God throws a human being into the fire who has been guilty of nothing except not having any power over himself.[885] Here Luther exults. 'Never,' he says, 'has *Discussion* revealed herself more clearly than in this passage. For though she uses different words, she says the same thing that Paul attributes to the wicked: "Why does he complain? Who resists his will?"'[886] Who would not be disgusted by debating with this fellow? *Discussion* proposed something absurd in order to prove that a simile does not correspond at all points, and he snatched at it as if it were said seriously. It is the same as if one who wanted to show that the body and the head in the simile of Christ and the church[887] do not correspond at all points were to say that there is this difference, that a living

* * * * *

---

[884] That is, that the passage is not intended to deny free will

[885] Erasmus had written 'Hic vas, quod ideo nihil commeruit, quia sui iuris non est, conicitur in ignem aeternum' ('In this case a vessel which is guilty of nothing precisely because it has no power over itself is thrown into eternal fire'); see Walter 57:10–11 and *A Discussion* CWE 76 55. Luther misquoted Erasmus as follows: 'quod nihil commeruit, nisi quod non sui iuris est' ('which has been guilty of nothing but not being its own master'). Watson (see LW 33 206 and n55) calls this a 'slight misquotation,' but the difference is significant.

[886] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 729:7–13 / LW 33 206

[887] Col 1:18

creature's head can be helped or harmed in turn by its limbs, whereas Christ can be neither helped nor harmed by his body, and then Luther should cry out that it was seriously meant that Christ is helped and harmed in turn by his body. Indeed this statement is not common to *Discussion* and the wicked murmurers but rather they have it in common with Luther, who teaches a doctrine that the wicked probably seize upon as an occasion to murmur.

[*Does free will violate God's power and freedom?*]

But what is it that makes *Discussion* reveal herself? If the simile matches in all respects, a human being who does not deserve it is thrown into the fire just as a vessel which does not deserve it is broken by the potter. It is utterly absurd to say this, but the more absurd it is the more effectively it proves what I maintain. Where are Luther's backers now, to applaud this deft statement of his? And at first, I thought the charge of impiety was being levelled particularly at *Discussion*, but as his discourse continues he makes clear that it includes all the Doctors of the church. In mournful speech he laments for God, whom the supporters of free will do not allow to do whatever he wants; he laments for Paul, whose simile of the clay and the potter is rejected.[888] If God does not wish to allow himself to do something that is inconsistent with justice, why is it surprising that pious men do not attribute any such thing to him? And if Paul's simile is valid in making the point for which it was chosen, how is there any injustice to Paul? The simile keeps mankind from making rash judgments about God's actions even if they cannot fully understand the reason for his plan. The simile was employed to make this point. Mankind is admonished to obey the will of God as the clay yields to the hand of the potter. It is a valid simile for that purpose; it is not valid to illustrate the opinion that eliminates free will and teaches that God works in us both the good by which we are saved and the evil for which we are damned, because it was not employed for that purpose, as we have shown. Why, then, is it absurd that God does not impart his grace to those who are invited but refuse to accept it or to those he knows will not use it well? Who bestows a benefit on someone who refuses it? This, if nothing else, is counted as merit: a person draws back the bolt and opens the door when grace knocks;[889] when a light is brought in, he directs his sight to it. Here Luther says: 'If God works in such a way that he pays attention to merit, why are they murmuring and protesting?'[890] When

* * * * *

[888] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 729:13–730:6 / LW 33 206–7
[889] Cf Matt 7:8 (Luke 11:10)
[890] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 730:6–7 / LW 33 207

he saves someone, there is no need for God to pay attention to the merit of his earlier life, although in this case he also pays attention to future merits and a mind susceptible to grace. When he damns someone, it is wicked to say he has no regard for merit. 'Why, then, are they murmuring?' Because they are wicked, because they begrudge the gentiles the goodness of God, because they think they are just though they are really wicked, because they are puffed up with pride in the Law, which they do not observe. This is the reason for that wicked murmuring! But if they had acknowledged what they were, if they had revered the good done by God to the gentiles, certainly they too would have been frightened by God's justice and would have taken refuge in his grace. Finally the Jews murmured because they themselves were rejected and the honour of being the sons of God was transferred to the gentiles.

'Who is surprised,' he says, 'let alone outraged or moved to protest, if someone is damned who deserves it?' In the end what are these words of Luther driving at but to persuade us that someone is damned who does not deserve it? 'Then where is the power of the potter to make what he wants if he is subject to merit and laws and is not allowed to make what he wants but rather is forced to make what he ought?'[891] Indeed, where is the immutable justice of God if he is not allowed to do what is unjust? Where is his inherent truth, which he can no more put away than his deity itself, if he cannot deceive us in his promises and Paul is not afraid to say of him, 'He cannot invalidate himself.'[892] And here again he presses upon us an inappropriate parable, one which was more applicable to not prying into God's dispensation of rewards and punishments. 'Paying attention to merit,' he says, 'is incompatible with his power and liberty to do what he wants.' And so God, who has pledged his faith to mankind, does not freely do what he wants unless he deceives us in his promises as often as he wishes? And so the power of the sacraments will also be uncertain. And yet he does freely whatever he has willingly bound himself to do. To support this Luther cites from the Gospel the head of a household who answered the workmen grumbling about unequal wages by asserting his free will in dealing with his possessions.[893] *Discussion* also grants that we must not demand of God the reason why he gives one person ten talents, another five, another three, another one.[894] The parable in the Gospel is not speaking about those who are chosen or rejected but about the Jews who were the first to be called and the gentiles who were called later; nevertheless, all receive the same reward. This pertains to how God dispenses his gifts, and in this incident no one is wronged. All that the simile expresses is the envious grief aroused by a benefit given to someone else, an emotion not felt by the pious but imagined in the parable for pedagogical reasons, which require that many correspondences in that comparison be overlooked. Here he ought to have recalled the parable about those invited to a banquet. Those who make excuses are pronounced to be unworthy, and they are pronounced to have been so before they were called: 'They were unworthy,' he says.[895] Why, then, are they called? So that they might not have a just excuse. Why do they make excuses? Because their wills are free to accept grace or to turn away from it. What keeps them from accepting it? A mind ensnared by the concerns and pleasure of this world. Christ called Peter, who followed him immediately.[896] If he had called Annas and Caiaphas[897] in a similar way, they would have ridiculed his invitation. You see, reader, how splendidly Luther has comported himself. Now listen to his ovation: 'These are the arguments,' he says, 'which invalidate *Discussion*'s gloss.'[898]

---

[891] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 730:8–11 / LW 33 207

[892] 2 Tim 2:13

[893] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 730:12–14 / LW 33 207; Matt 20:1–15

[894] Matt 25:15; cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 68 and n328.

But he goes on with the argument, and (obliging debater that he is) he supposes what is undoubtedly true from the pronouncements of Scripture, that God does pay attention to merits when he damns someone: 'For the same reason,' he says, 'he also pays attention to merit when he saves someone.' First of all, I replied that the reasons for damning or saving are not equivalent. A king who grants life to someone deservedly condemned to death does not wrong others whom he does not pardon, but rather he is said to be merciful to the one he spared. Thus by the judgment of common sense Luther is wrong when he asserts that it is equally unjust to crown the unworthy or to punish the unworthy. But in general God looks to human merits both when he saves and when he damns, merits, I say, which are not on an equal level with the reward but without which no rewards are given. 'Therefore,' he says, 'God justifies on the basis of preceding merits.'[899] Why not? But merits that are present to God before people are born. But here posit for me three kinds of merits and likewise three kinds of

* * * * *

[895] Matt 22:2–8; Erasmus is also thinking of Luke 14:16–20.

[896] Matt 4:18–20

[897] John 18:13–14

[898] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 730:14–15 / LW 33 207; on 'ovation' see n142 above.

[899] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 730:16–22 / LW 33 207

rewards. A life lived straightforwardly – if not without sin, at least without malice and at the same time commendable for many good deeds on a human level – has some merits which to a certain extent render a person worthy of the grace of being called. Then let the reward of such merits be impelling grace. Then again, if the mind does not turn away from impelling grace but accepts God's gift sincerely, that acceptance is imputed as a merit which in some fashion merits the reception of justifying grace. Finally, if the human will, led by grace, forcefully contends for the prize of eternal life[900] through works of piety, it merits the kingdom of heaven in some manner.[901] But when God destined that these would have his grace and eternal life, he did so precisely because he foreknew that his grace would not be fruitless in them. On the other hand, when he destined others for hell, he did so precisely because he foreknew from all eternity what kind of deeds they would do. But still, according to my teaching, it is not necessary that the merits of good works – merits, that is, of the first or third kind – should precede justifying grace. For the prophet promised, and Christ himself professes, that he came to offer salvation freely to all who wished to believe in him.[902] On this point even Paul pays no attention to the merits of life before conversion but rather to trust in the promises. Accordingly, just as it is shameless for Luther to hammer away so verbosely and insist that it is as unjust to save the undeserving as to damn the undeserving, so too it is simply wicked to say that God damns anyone who does not deserve it. Quite the contrary, he always imposes lighter punishments than are deserved, according to what the theologians teach as probable. But who is Luther calling unworthy? The wicked? God does not save them; rather he calls the wicked to repentance, and those who repent he receives into his grace because of his own mercy. And so we can also now understand how it is just for him to crown the unworthy. It is just because he promised salvation to those who believe. In other respects to accept the repentance of the wicked is attributable to mercy, not justice. But how he damns those who do not deserve it is neither believed nor understood at this time. It will not even be understood or believed when the Son of Man is revealed, for it is not understood or believed by the pious – because it is false. But what does that portentous language of his mean when he says that 'according to

* * * * *

[900] Cf Phil 3:14.

[901] The process which Erasmus posits here is very close to the contemporary scholastic teaching *facere quod in se est*. See *A Discussion* CWE 76 32 n119.

[902] The prophet is perhaps Habakuk (2:4), cited by Paul at Rom 1:16. For Christ's promise see Mark 16:16.

our perception it is as unjust to praise the fratricide of Cain and make him a king as to kill the innocent Abel'?[903] Who extols the vicious for their evil deeds or punishes the pious for their good deeds? Such monstrosities are the delight of the hyperbolic doctor.[904]

Who has a temperament so patient as to be able to put up with this fellow's boasts, insults, nonsense? He imagines here that *Discussion* in her vexation compares seemingly contradictory scriptural texts with each other in order to elicit the true meaning out of the conflict.[905] Why not? Is this technique original with *Discussion*? Has it not been employed by the most reputable Doctors of the church? But who said that Scripture contradicts itself? This is what *Discussion* says: 'And thus Paul will be found to contradict himself.' 'Thus,' that is, if you press us with the literal meaning of the words.[906] If man is to God in every respect what the clay is to the potter, that is, if a man's works contribute nothing more towards his salvation or damnation than the clay that is shaped in one way or another according to the whim of the potter, how can Paul say 'if someone cleanses himself from them'?[907] – and there are many such places in Scripture. If you press the literal sense upon us to the exclusion of figurative language, the clay does not even speak to the potter (whereas the person compared to the clay does speak), and the dirty vessel did not defile itself nor can it cleanse itself. How does Luther get out of this? He brings out that old but utterly shameless refrain about subjunctive verbs. He brings out a hyperbole that is very close to a lie. Through this refrain he rules over all of Scripture, to the consternation of the gods and men alike.[908] 'Hyperbole' pretends that I undertook to prove that free will can do nothing good, though *Discussion* never made that claim anywhere; and if she had, it does not follow that if free will can do nothing effectively without the assistance of grace, it can do nothing at all.[909] But this is the way the hyperbolic doctor continually reasons.

* * * * *

---

[903] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 730:33–731:1 / LW 33 208

[904] By analogy with such titles as 'the angelic doctor' (Thomas Aquinas) or 'the subtle doctor' (John Duns Scotus). Folly makes fun of such titles in *Moriae encomium* (ASD IV-3 166:635–8 / CWE 27 134).

[905] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 731:17–22 / LW 33 208–9

[906] *A Discussion* CWE 76 55–6

[907] 2 Tim 2:21, cited by Luther at *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 731:20 / LW 33 209; cf 552–3 above.

[908] *Adagia* I i 74

[909] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 731:26–31 / LW 33 209

But how does Luther prove to us his dogma that imperative, optative, and subjunctive verbs do not imply any facts? By grammatical authorities? Then those who interpret as *Discussion* does (under whose name he throws stones at the Doctors of the church) knew no grammar. Indeed that interpretation of his belongs more to the dialecticians and sophists[910] than to the grammarians, who interpret speech according to common sense. But 'You shall love the Lord God' and 'You shall love your neighbour'[911] have indicative verbs. 'They are used figuratively,' he says, 'for imperatives.'[912] But this figurative language itself indicates that what is commanded can be performed in some fashion. For the one who issues the commands 'If you want to be saved, if you want to do your duty, you will do this and avoid that' takes them to imply that if a person does not obey them he does not wish to be saved. 'Sit at my right hand,' 'Ask me and I will give you nations,' 'Enter into the joy of your Lord'[913] – because these are imperative verbs, do we understand that these things are not done or cannot be done? If Luther appeals to the grammarians, if he makes common sense the arbiter of Holy Scripture, he must accept these conclusions. He will not give credence to an interpretation offered, I will not say by *Discussion*, but by the whole church, unless another passage is supplied which confirms the interpretation. But what good would it do to bring up thousands and thousands of passages if Luther is allowed to interpret them as he has interpreted many passages up to this point? If a passage is alleged to prove another passage, what could be easier than for a person who accepts no one else's interpretation to interpret it in some way or other that is favourable to his dogma, especially if that person allows himself to contradict himself whenever it is convenient? Others have shown that he has done so in many places, but he courteously, or ludicrously, pretends not to notice them, imagining, like the children in the anecdote he

* * * * *

[910] Erasmus is referring to the modist grammarians such as Thomas of Erfurt, whose categories and schemes depended heavily on logic and often seemed to fly in the face of ordinary usage. He had mocked them in *Moriae encomium* (ASD-3 156–7 / CWE 27 129–30). When More defended *Moriae encomium* in his letter to Dorp in 1515, he attacked the modist grammarians at even greater length; see Daniel Kinney's edition in vol 15 of The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St Thomas More 15 volumes (New Haven and London 1963–1997) 27–39.

[911] Deut 6:4 (cited at Mark 12:30); Lev 19:18 (cited at Matt 19:19 and Mark 12:31)

[912] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 676:18–21 / LW 33 125

[913] Ps 109:1 (quoted Matt 22:44, Mark 12:36, and Luke 20:42); Ps 2:8; Matt 25:21

himself mentioned, that no one can see him if he shuts his own eyes.[914] He cries out that all of Scripture will be transformed if we accept this reasoning: God commands this; therefore what he commands can be done.[915] And Scripture is unaffected if we believe with Luther that verbs of commanding, forbidding, threatening, exhorting, promising, coaxing, and frightening – and all of Holy Scripture swarms with them – are concerned only with things that cannot be done in any way and that all of this is said by God to taunt our pride or to show that we can do nothing but sin, even if grace comes to our assistance. And to establish this paradox he has the brief saying[916] from Paul, 'From the Law comes knowledge of sin,'[917] and I have shown above how he has distorted that.[918] But he urges *Discussion* to liberate herself and show how the following statements are compatible: 'Free choice can will nothing good' and '"If anyone cleanses himself," therefore he can cleanse himself.' Ignoring the falsehood which he assumes, I will extricate myself. In my judgment, corrupted free will cannot do anything by itself to achieve salvation effectively without grace, and if someone happens to be a vessel of ignominy, he can purge himself of the company of unclean vessels with the help of grace. You see, dear reader, how this soldier has exerted himself; now look at his triumph. 'You see, then,' he says, 'how she is distressed and defeated[919] by the simile of the potter and all she does is try to elude it, at the same time giving no thought to the damage her interpretation does to the cause she has undertaken or to how she refutes and mocks her own self.'[920] So says the triumpher. I have already shown time and again that the simile of the clay and the potter is employed to check the arrogance of the Jews, that it does not agree with the subject in all respects, and that it has nothing to do with the role of free will in the process of eternal salvation but rather applies to the reason for which God acts in dispensing temporal goods or rewards and punishments; there is no point which offers me less difficulty than that simile.

* * * * *

---

914 *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 667:11–13 / LW 33 111
915 *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 731:37–732:3 / LW 33 209
916 Literally, 'three words' (Otto no 1870)
917 Rom 3:20
918 See 357–68 above.
919 Erasmus gives these two words in masculine forms rather than the feminine forms in Luther.
920 *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 732:7–12 / LW 33 209–10

He goes on in his usual way, denying that he ever proposed the following interpretation: '"Stretch out your hand," that is, "grace will stretch it out." All of this,' he says, '*Discussion* makes up about me to promote her cause. But what I said was, etc.'[921] *Discussion* did not say that Luther wrote this; she was referring to Karlstadt.[922] On this point she was truly stupid enough to believe that such mighty fellow initiates would agree on such a serious point. Luther is now unconcerned, I see, about what Karlstadt wrote, and he defends only his own ideas, interpreting them to his own advantage, conceivably having forgotten what he also wrote – which is no rare occurrence, I think, since he babbles so much. But although *Discussion* quotes several passages that appear at first blush to contradict each other, Luther pretends not to see them and touches on only one or two. And when *Discussion* does not use the same method to reconcile all of them, Luther still sings his one and only refrain. These two passages resemble each other: 'Does the clay say to the potter?' and 'Does the axe lord it over the one who cuts with it?' (Isaiah 10).[923] They seem to be contradicted by 'If anyone cleanses himself'[924] and other texts quoted by *Discussion*. But *Discussion* reconciles them by saying that the language about the clay and the potter and likewise about the axe and the workman do not eliminate human free will in all respects but rather check the pride of anyone who trusts in himself and rebels against God; and so they do not contradict other places which exhort us to reform our lives. There is another way to reconcile them if we remember that the similes of the clay and the potter, the workman and the axe, the rod and the one who beats with it do not match in all points, since a man is a living tool, which acts at the same time as it is acted upon; it is the sort of tool that a beast of burden is to a farmer or a servant to his master. Therefore, whenever Scripture says 'Stay away from impure things,'[925] it is addressing man's free will; whenever it says 'I will take away their stony hearts,'[926] it is referring to the help of grace. *Discussion* did not dream this up out of her own head, however 'drowned, stifled, and corrupted' she may be, but derived it from Holy Scripture understood according to common sense, and, if that is not sufficient, she gives the opinion of the most reputable ancient interpreters. What is said in 1 Corinthians 12[:6], 'He works all things in all men,' is not concerned with free will but with the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit, which God imparts to individuals as he himself sees will be useful to the whole body. This passage is so far from eliminating free will that Paul professes that the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets, so that when a second prophet rises the first prophet, however he may be inspired, can be silent if he wishes.[927] Could anything be more banal than Luther's solution of all difficulties by distinguishing indicative from imperative and subjunctive verbs? No mortal would dare to express such a fabrication among learned men, but Luther boasts of it everywhere as if it were far and away the most reliable and invincible weapon. But what will he say to this text in John: 'Everyone who places his hope in him makes himself holy as he is holy'?[928] This is an indicative verb, and lest he should take refuge in figurative language, it is in the present tense.[929] If someone makes himself holy, is he doing something or not? We read in the same evangelist, 'Whoever is of God does not sin.'[930] Is someone who holds himself back from sin not doing anything? Change these texts into the imperative mood: 'Whoever has this hope in him, let him make himself holy' and 'Whoever is born of God, let him not sin.' In this way all imperative verbs could be changed into the indicative mood. Does anyone who infers from imperative verbs that it is possible to do what is commanded have a different Scripture? Therefore, only Luther and his few followers have the genuine Scripture! And how can *Discussion* be said to have dreamed something up out of her own brain if it is in fact held by all Greek and Latin and medieval writers? When will he stop cockadoodledooing at us that 'this either proves nothing or it contradicts what *Discussion* has undertaken to defend'? In the next section also he dwells on these notions, repeats them, hammers away at them, reiterates them, thrusts them at us, even to the point of nausea.[931] If I were prepared to reply to each point individually, there would be no end to this volume.

---

[921] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 732:13–15 / LW 33 210

[922] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 58; *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 164–5; and 451–3 above.

[923] Rom 9:20–1 and Isa 10:15; cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 56.

[924] 2 Tim 2:21

[925] Prov 3:7

[926] Ezek 11:19, cited in *A Discussion* CWE 76 56–7. The 1527 Basel edition has *cor carneum* 'heart of flesh,' which has been corrected to *cor lapideum* 'heart of stone' in accordance with the biblical text.

* * * * *

---

[927] 1 Cor 14:30–2

[928] 1 John 3:3, cited in *A Discussion* CWE 76 57

[929] That is, it is not in the future tense to express a commandment (like 'Thou shalt not kill'); see 563 above.

[930] 1 John 5:18

[931] Erasmus has briefly responded here to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 732:29–733:21 / LW 33 210–12.

[ERASMUS' RESPONSE TO LUTHER'S DEFENCE OF HIS ASSERTIO]

[*On spirit and flesh: Genesis 6:3: 'My Spirit will not abide in man forever, for he is flesh'*]

Triumphantly he takes up the text in Genesis 6[:3]: 'My spirit will not remain in man because he is flesh.'[932] Although *Discussion* here follows reputable exegetes, she is nevertheless told, 'She never fails to indicate that she considers Scripture to be mere fables'; nor is Jerome treated any more leniently, since he 'trifles' and is called a 'perverter of Scripture.'[933] Bravo, Luther! Fire away just so![934] This is the way people usually speak if they are driven by the Spirit and imitate Paul by pleasing everyone,[935] so that they would not be a stumbling-block to the gospel! But to the matter at hand. Luther vigorously denies that any place can be found in Holy Scripture where 'the spirit of God' is used to mean 'wrath,' but maintains that the reverse is true: kindness and sweetness are attributed to the Spirit.[936] First of all, suppose that Luther's assumption is true. What is there to keep 'spirit' from sometimes having the meaning it has in ordinary speech, since we speak of violent and headstrong feelings as 'spirit,' and the Greeks also apply the phrase 'to breathe mightily'[937] to those who are haughty and fierce, especially since the context of that passage supports this meaning. For God is presented there as outraged by the crimes of mankind and as thinking of destroying the whole race of mortals. Luther's inference is hardly logical: 'This word has a different meaning in other places; therefore in this place it must mean the same as in those places.'[938] But I have no doubt that more than fifteen places would be found in Scripture where the word 'spirit' is used to refer to God's outrage or vengeance, unless Isaiah 11[:4], 'And the rod of his mouth will strike the earth, and the spirit of his lips will kill the wicked,' is not talking about vengeance. In chapter 30[:27] of the same prophet we find: 'Behold, the name of the Lord comes from afar; his fury

* * * * *

[932] Basel 1527 and LB omit 'forever,' but this seems to be an oversight.
[933] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 733:22–734:4 / LW 33 212
[934] See *Adagia* II iv 28.
[935] Cf 1 Cor 10:32–3.
[936] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 734:5–7 / LW 33 213
[937] The Latin *spiritus* literally means 'breath.'
[938] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 734:7–9 / LW 33 213. Luther argues that even if 'spirit' means wrath in some other place, Erasmus could still not prove that it has that meaning here. But Luther does imply that if 'spirit' does not mean 'wrath' in other places, it does not mean 'wrath' here.

is burning and heavy to bear; his lips are full of wrath and his tongue is like devouring fire; his spirit is like a torrent flooding as high as the neck to destroy the nations.' Again, 2 Thessalonians 2[:8]: 'And then will be revealed that wicked man whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the spirit of his mouth.' Does 'spirit' here also mean 'kindness' rather than 'vengeance'? I could have introduced very many texts of this sort, but these are enough to silence Luther's 'spirit.' He might at least have added 'at least so far as I know.' But he has never learned to speak in anything but hyperboles. So much for the spirit. By a similar device he proves that 'flesh' cannot be taken to mean 'weakness' but rather means 'vice.'[939] *Discussion* said nothing against this, but she denied that it must always be taken to refer to wicked impulses.[940] For wicked impulses connote extreme malice, even to the point of scorning God. But it is easier to forgive vices when they result from error or weakness. Such, I think, were the Corinthians and the Galatians: imperfect but not wicked. In fact, even the adultery of David, coupled with murder, is not attributed to wicked malice but to the weakness of the flesh: he saw her by chance; he was carried away by love, which made him like a drunken man and led him to kill Uriah. But when he was reprimanded, how quickly he repented, how he mourned for his sin! From this it is clear that he fell through weakness.[941] I added this point to show that, even if the Corinthians were labouring under grievous vices, it would still not impugn my argument very much. It is also false that 'the flesh' always means 'vice,' unless we call the weakness of nature a vice; from such weakness the Lord himself was not exempt when he said, 'Father, if it is possible, may this cup pass from me.'[942]

After he has explained the words to suit his own convenience, he changes the public reading of the church, substituting 'will not judge' for 'will not remain,'[943] where Lyra points out that some Hebrew rabbi has translated it 'will not pass judgment,' so that the sense would be: I will no longer put off and suspend my sentence, because they are flesh, that is, by

* * * * *

[939] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 734:9–14 / LW 33 213

[940] *A Discussion* CWE 76 59

[941] 2 Kings 11:2–12:14

[942] Matt 26:39

[943] The reading 'will not remain' occurred in Gen 6:3 when it was read as the second reading from the prophets on Holy Saturday; see *Missale Romanum Mediolani 1474 and A Collation with Other Editions Printed before 1570* ed Robert Lippe, 2 vols, Bradshaw Society 17 and 33 (London 1899–1907) I 179.

their own nature inclined to evil unless they are checked by afflictions and threats.[944] Moreover, he omits the pronoun 'those,' though it is added by Jerome.[945] After dispatching these matters in this way, he takes up the interpretation of Scripture, which he proclaims is 'sufficiently clear if we dismiss our own dreams.'[946] What does he mean by 'if we dismiss our own dreams'? This: if we scorn the interpretations of all the ancients and embrace what Luther asserts as if it were an oracular pronouncement. Well then, we will lend you our ears! 'They are the words,' he says, 'of an angry God.' On this point we agree with him. 'The giants provided a reason for it by their tyranny and lust.' Granted, to be sure. 'So much so that they forced an angry God to speed up the Flood and to put off for hardly a hundred years an event he would otherwise never have brought about at all.'[947] How God can be forced to speed up something he would otherwise never have brought about I leave it to Luther to explain, since he hates figurative language and attributes an immutable will to God.[948] In the meantime, to pass over the commonplace which he once more turns angrily against corrupters of Holy Scripture, and also his blasphemies against Jerome and all who follow him,[949] and to put the matter concisely, first of all, it cannot be denied that the phrase 'for all eternity' is ambiguous. For the meaning could be that the Spirit of God will never dwell in man from that time forward, and it could mean that the dwelling of the divine Spirit in man will not be continuous. Luther accepts the second meaning, though the words seem to express the first meaning.

Furthermore, we exempt him from considering Jerome's annotation, drawn from the tradition of the Jews, and we grant that 'the spirit' is taken to mean God's desire to provide for the salvation of mankind and 'the flesh' to mean the desire to sin. If Luther applies this interpretation to the nature of the whole human race, everyone from the time of Adam's fall was flesh, as they also are today. Why, then, was God silent for so long, and after so many years had rolled by why does he begin to threaten a day of the

* * * * *

[944] Nicholas of Lyra *Postilla super totam Bibliam* 4 vols (Strasbourg: J. Mentelin, 1492; repr Frankfurt 1971) I, on Gen 6:3

[945] In *Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos* Jerome says that the Hebrew text reads, 'My spirit will not pass judgment on those men eternally, for they are flesh'; see *A Discussion* CWE 76 59 and n274.

[946] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 734:16–17 / LW 33 213

[947] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 734:17–22 / LW 33 213; see Gen 6:3.

[948] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 700–2 / LW 33 161–4; cf 447–51 above.

[949] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 734:22–735:3 / LW 33 213

utter destruction[950] of everything? Later, under the Roman empire, when I believe there were on the earth men far more depraved than those giants, who were merely crazy about women, why did God pour forth his Spirit so abundantly upon all flesh, saying, 'I take delight in being with the children of mankind?[951] If God knew that those men could not live well without the help of his Spirit, why did he blame them and destine them for destruction, since he did not give them the help of the Spirit? Moreover, why did he blame them for not improving their morals by the example and admonitions of the just Noah? Again, why did he grant them the space of a hundred and twenty years so that possibly they would be frightened by such fierce threats and repent? For by granting them years and issuing threats, he showed that he did not wish to destroy them; otherwise he could have done so silently. But he threatened them and gave them such an ample period of time precisely so that they might repent in the meantime and escape the anger of God. But if Luther is referring not only to the corrupt nature shared by all mankind, which he is always exaggerating very hyperbolically, but even more to the voluntary sins of mortals, which always became progressively worse as they preferred to follow their passions rather than the law of nature or the warnings of the just Noah, then we have something to attribute to free will: first because they spurned the natural law, and then because they scorned the impelling grace offered through the warnings and life of Noah. Since this offer of help made them even worse or more incorrigible, they were handed over to destruction so that they would not sin endlessly, heaping up for themselves a heavier damnation, as happened to the Jews when they stubbornly refused the gospel. But if 'the Spirit of God cannot endure to be among men' because all are flesh, as Luther says,[952] how did it endure to be in Noah, and how was it afterwards poured out upon many? But what figurative language do we have here in 'the spirit of God cannot,' since God is omnipotent? Luther allows himself to talk in this way, but he makes a great uproar if we let anything like this slip out. But to Luther whatever makes for his ironclad dogma is pious. In this passage, then, the language does not apply to the whole human race but to that nation at that time, and it does not apply so much to the corruption of nature as to a life contaminated by crimes. And so there is room for free will

* * * * *

[950] The text has *panolethriam*, a Latinization of the Greek noun πανωλεθρίαν. In what follows Erasmus examines various elements of the story of Noah in Gen 6:9–9:28.

[951] Prov 8:31

[952] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 735:3–5 / LW 33 214; cf Gen 6:3.

because they scorned the law of nature, which called them to a better life; they scorned the example and the warnings of the just, for it is probable that such have never been lacking in any era; they scorned the goodness of God, who tolerated their malice for so many centuries and even so granted them a hundred and twenty years before the flood he was threatening them with; they did not even repent when they saw the ark being prepared. Why were they so hard-hearted? Was their nature the only reason? No indeed, their hard hearts resulted much more from their contempt for impelling grace, which they could have embraced through free will and thus returned to a pious life through repentance. And Luther proclaims that these men did not deserve to be damned, just as the Jews did not.[953] At this point, lest he once more cry out that *Discussion* is dreaming, I will transcribe a brief passage from Chrysostom, in which he makes God speak as follows: 'But because I want to save even those who were incorrigible sinners and I want no one to perish, for that reason I will grant a time span of a hundred and twenty years, so that, if you should be willing and should wash away your sins and, by repenting and turning to virtue, should strive to do better, you might escape punishment and danger.'[954] That is what Chrysostom says, though I am well aware that Luther will immediately mock him because of verbs in the subjunctive mood.[955] But Chrysostom had not learned that rule! Nor do I present the testimony of Chrysostom to refute Luther, who already claims the right to declare anathema anyone who explains Scripture in a way different from his own.

But with amazing vehemence he bears down on us with the word 'flesh,' explaining it as meaning the wicked. 'And they are nothing but that,' he says, 'and they are completely flesh.'[956] If we accept these hyperboles, he will make man into a devil. But where men are said to be flesh there is no mention of vices except that they married wives. For this is the passage: 'And when mankind had begun to multiply over the face of the earth and had procreated daughters, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and out of all of them they chose wives for themselves. And God said, "My spirit will not remain in man forever because he is flesh."'[957] Since Luther is always crying out that nothing in

* * * * *

[953] That is, Luther says that the damnation of these sinners and of the Jews is not caused by their merits but by necessity

[954] *In capita 5 et 6 Genesis* 12.4 PG 53 190–1

[955] Cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 678:1–680:22 / LW 33 128-32.

[956] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 735:20–7 / LW 33 214.

[957] Gen 6:1–3

Scripture is obscure, let him just explain this chapter for us: Who are the sons of God? Who are the daughters of men? Who are the giants born of the sons of God and the daughters of men? But apart from such questions, this passage can be understood to say no more than that they either yielded to their lust in taking wives (as Chrysostom interprets it),[958] or they took wives promiscuously, paying no attention to nearness of relationship, or they debauched the wives of others – and this last opinion is touched upon only by Lyra,[959] at least so far as I know. Certainly Luther believes it is pious to marry, and according to orthodox theologians it is a pardonable sin in marriage to give some leeway to pleasure, nor is it a crime to have intercourse with one's wife for the sake of passion, not offspring. Where, then, is this wickedness which Luther emphasizes because they are flesh? Just before Paul gives the reason why he calls them flesh: he calls them flesh because they yield to the desires of the flesh, that is, to pleasure rather than to the things of eternity. But in the course of time, this desire went on to greater malice, and that is why the following text is 'The earth is corrupt in the sight of the Lord and it is filled with iniquity.'[960] Even so there is no mention of such wickedness as sacrificing to demons or hurling blasphemies at God; the earth was a cesspool of passion and pleasure. Why, then, is God so heated in his anger? I would say, because this whole scriptural passage figuratively attributes human feelings and words to God, not because they were truly there but so that dull-witted mankind can more easily understand things to which they can relate. Therefore God is presented as if he were a newly crowned king or the father of a family who has not yet grown used to the vices of his people and so is upset even by slight offences and punishes them quite severely. But when he learns that he must put up with one of two alternatives, either to have no family or to tolerate their faults, he becomes more gentle and either forgives transgressions or at least punishes them more gently. Thus before the Flood he says, 'I intend to destroy them, and the earth together with them.'[961] But after the Flood he speaks somewhat more gently: 'From now on I will never curse the ground because of man,' and in order to make them more confident he placed the rainbow in the clouds as a sign of the

* * * * *

[958] *In capita 5 et 6 Genesis* 22.3 PG 53 189

[959] Nicholas of Lyra *Postilla super totam Bibliam* (see n944 above) 1, on Gen 6:2; Lyra gives several alternative meanings for the sons of God and the daughters of men and how they interacted.

[960] Gen 6:11; cf Gen 6:5.

[961] Gen 6:13

covenant.[962] This is not the place to discuss what this figurative aspect means. And so when God says 'they are flesh,' the meaning is less serious than Luther's interpretation makes it; surely it refers to those who are weak and prone to vice and devoted to bodily rather than spiritual matters, just as if he had said 'they are men.' But this new father of a family demands that they be gods and be redolent of their earliest origin.[963]

This is the way Paul uses the word 'flesh' when he writes to the Corinthians, if I may refute in passing Luther's vehement assertion that there the Corinthians are said to be fleshly because of wickedness,[964] since in the same place and for the same reason he calls them 'little ones in Christ' and soon after 'human.' But the wicked are not 'in Christ,' and the word 'human' implies not wickedness but a certain imperfection. Paul's words are as follows: 'I could not speak to you as if you were spiritual but only as fleshly persons, as little ones in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food. For you were not yet able to eat it; but even now you are not able, for you are still fleshly. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and do you not walk on a human level? For when one person says "I belong to Paul" and another says "I belong to Apollo," are you not human?'[965] There was such strife even among the apostles when they were still crude and fleshly, but they were not wicked. For they lacked malice; it did not alienate them from Christ. In this way Paul also addresses the Romans in chapter 6, not demanding that they be perfect but saying, 'I speak in a human way because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you have delivered your limbs over, etc.'[966] And sometimes he says he is not speaking 'on a human level' when he rejects human emotions.[967]

But such points are to no avail: Luther will immediately make man into Satan, just as before, in the course of the debate, he also made no distinction between them,[968] although there are two natures, as it were, in man, an earthly body and a heavenly mind. When he wishes to raise himself up to heaven, grace will not fail to help him against the part which tends towards the earthly. But there is nothing in that which diminishes either the freedom of God's will or the glory of grace. This was willed by

* * * * *

[962] Gen 8:21, 9:12

[963] That is, be as they were before the Fall

[964] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 735:29–31 / LW 33 215

[965] 1 Cor 3:1–4

[966] Rom 6:19

[967] 1 Cor 9:8; Gal 1:11

[968] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 762:34–763:4 / LW 33 256

divine providence so that there might remain in man the ability to make himself available to impelling grace; and so in this way also God's will is done, and even what man can do by his natural power is the gift of God, a point which *Discussion* repeats time after time but which Luther persists in overlooking. Finally, let us grant that human or fleshly emotion does not understand the things of the Spirit, 'who examines the deep things of God';[969] there are still rudiments, there are still gradations leading up to the perfection of the Spirit. A man is born anew, but this birth is not always immediate; it has an infancy, childhood, adolescence, and maturity as the grace of God leads human weakness gradually to a better life. Accordingly, even if we were to grant that what is said about the corrupt era of Noah applies to all mankind – which is improbable and which I do not believe to be true – still this opinion does not exclude free will, since Augustine attributed free will even to Pharaoh, though its power was diminished the more he became hardened in sin;[970] and yet if he had not used what remained, however tiny, to turn away from God when he was enjoined to repent, he would have been saved. And if grace is withdrawn from someone, this happens because of what the person deserved earlier.

[*Other Old Testament passages: Genesis 6:5, Isaiah 40:2, Isaiah 40:6–8*]
He defends the texts from Genesis 8[:21], 'The understanding and thought of the human heart are prone to evil from adolescence onward,' and chapter 6[:19], 'All the thoughts of his heart are intent on evil at all times.' Here he is amazed at what *Discussion* says, 'A proclivity to evil, which most men have, does not totally eliminate free will,'[971] as if *Discussion* implied that everyone did not have such a proclivity. The mother of Christ had none, I think, just as Christ also did not, and perhaps many others who are unknown to us have received this gift through God's grace. 'But here God is speaking generally.'[972] Let it be so, but general language does not preclude the privileges of a few. But as for the Hebraism he cites for us,[973] which does not agree either with the Greek exegetes or with Jerome's interpretation and has never been noted by any reputable interpreter, I can reply

* * * * *

---

[969] 1 Cor 2:10

[970] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 23.45 PL 44 910–11

[971] *A Discussion* CWE 76 59; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 736:8–9 / LW 33 215

[972] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 736:10–17 / LW 33 215–16

[973] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 736:20–5 / LW 33 216. Luther claims that the Hebrew of Gen 8:21 means that men are not merely prone to evil but are altogether evil.

that either Luther does not understand the force of the Hebrew language or he has a corrupt codex. But let us go beyond what is necessary and grant that everything a person thinks up by himself is totally evil; nevertheless, he has a disposition which is manageable by the Spirit, who does not fail anyone except those who willingly resist. Indeed common sense cries out against this Hebraism. We see what seeds of virtue there were among the pagans. Indeed the virtuous deeds they actually performed without Christ were extraordinary. Not everything that man thinks, then, is totally evil, unless you call evil anything that does not bestow perfect justification. Augustine writes that the glory of the empire was given to the Romans because of certain pious and holy deeds;[974] no person in his right mind crowns someone who is evil. Luther is upset because *Discussion* does not emphasize our proclivity to evil sufficiently to suit him. I acknowledge that some temperaments favoured by birth and education have very little of this proclivity. For the most part it comes not from nature but from corrupt education, bad company, from a habit of sinning, and a will that is malicious. The scriptural text in Genesis 6 is not speaking specifically about human nature but about corrupt emotions, and it is speaking generally; for I do not think it applies to Noah and his family. But it is no wonder that such an idea is unacceptable to Luther, since he exaggerates this drive and impulse to evil so much that even when the Spirit works in a person he can do nothing but evil. It is better, then, to take a middle position than either to attribute nothing to our natural proclivity or else to attribute more to it than any pious person can tolerate. And then there is this argument: 'If no part of repentance depends on choice, why was time given for repentance?' Here his reply solves one difficulty by bringing up another: 'Why did God give so many commandments that cannot be kept?'[975] In fact, he gave commandments so that it might be understood that those who stubbornly scorned them perished by a just judgment of God and so that they might become a warning to others not to dare to do such things. For some five hundred years, I think, God in his goodness had tolerated a human race that bore more than enough resemblance to its progenitors, and when they grew worse and worse, he tried to strike terror into them by passing sentence against them, but in the meanwhile he gave them time enough to repent, to make it clear that, when God's great leniency and fierce threats

* * * * *

[974] *De civitate Dei* 5.12 is entitled 'By what virtues the ancient Romans merited that the true God, although they did not worship him, should enlarge their empire.'

[975] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 736:27–33 / LW 33 216

did not move them to lead better lives, they were deservedly destroyed as incorrigible sinners who would be examples for others in the future. Such a response is far more agreeable to Scripture and common sense than what Luther proposes.

He defends as an invincible weapon the text he brought up from Isaiah 40[:2]: 'She has received from the hand of the Lord double[976] for all her sins.' And here again he beats up on Jerome and the Jews.[977] How much more he would have raged against me if I had brought up this interpretation out of my own head! What shall we do with this fellow, who accepts nothing but Scripture – but only as he himself interprets it? Yet in his *Assertion* how much authority is given to Augustine and Gregory![978] But to draw forth the sense from the context, it cannot be denied that Isaiah is dealing here with the Jews who would be freed by Cyrus from the Babylonian captivity. Once this foundation has been laid, it is easier to investigate the allegory. Because of their sins they were led away to Babylon, where for seventy years they suffered both long and heavy punishment. At last God took pity on them; he put aside his anger and looked on them with favour, concluding the suffering they had endured with the consolation of his mercy. This is the usual progression in all the prophets: threats and terrible blows are followed by soothing consolation. These are the words of the prophet: 'Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and summon her, because her warfare is over; her wickedness is set aside; she has received double measure from the hand of the Lord for all her sins.'[979] If we transfer this to the level of morality, how else can you take it but as meaning that after inflicting punishment, God generously pours forth the grace of his consolation if the sinner repents? The harshness of penance is followed by the joy of a good conscience. As for the word 'double,' it suits the feelings of someone who takes pity, because his emotion has reversed itself. For Scripture very often speaks of God in anthropomorphical figures, just as if he were a father who has whipped his son but whose anger has been dissipated by pity; he

* * * * *

[976] The word *duplicia* 'double,' which was omitted by some slip of the pen or typographical error, has been added in the translation. It is correctly included a few lines later.

[977] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 736:35–737:8 / LW 33 216–17

[978] In the thirty-sixth article of his *Assertio* (which Erasmus answered in *A Discussion*) Luther cited Augustine twice (WA 7 142:27–8 and 147:32–3 / CWE 76 301 and 308) but not Gregory. In other articles, however, he cites and quotes both: Augustine, for example, at WA 7 138:13–14 and 142:8–10); Gregory, for example, at WA 7 138:6–13 and 33–6, 141:33–142:2.

[979] Isa 40:2

regrets having caused his son to suffer, and when he is placated the punishment seems heavier than the son deserved, just as when he was angry it seemed too light. Now if you parallel the prophecy with the Law and the gospel, the Babylonian captivity was the reign of sin, which oppressed both the Jews under the law of Moses and the gentiles under the law of nature. Jerusalem was the church, including both nations, so that Jerome translates 'summon her,' and further on we have 'and all flesh shall likewise see what the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'[980] Let us take the consolation to be the remission of sins and the promise of richer graces. Let us take the double measure as referring to the calamities inflicted by God and the torment of an unhappy conscience, both transformed into joy and peace.

This interpretation is far less strained than that of Luther, who interprets Jerusalem as the Jewish people oppressed by the tyranny of the Law, which lays down many commandments, none of which can be kept; he takes Cyrus to be grace, which repays evil deeds with lavish favours – something quite unheard-of. And when the prophet writes that those calamities were imposed upon them by God, though they were inflicted by men, he interprets that to mean that the remission of sins was freely granted by God in return for demerits, as if the reward for evil deeds were the forgiveness of sins.[981] And this fabrication, which never occurred to any mortal except Luther, establishes the invincible testimony of Isaiah against free will! And at the same time, how many claims he makes with little sense of shame! He claims we must read *militia* [warfare], not *malitia* [ill will], though Jerome makes no mention of such a reading. And the Septuagint translated ταπείνωσιν, that is, 'humiliation,' so that the meaning of either translation is the same. For the afflicted are said to be humiliated, and ill will is called affliction.[982] Now even if we were to accept the reading from Hebrew as *militia*, it is more probable that this signifies that harsh and foul warfare of Satan whose 'wages,' as Paul says, are death.[983] Then he takes it upon himself to interpret 'warfare' as the Law, so that for God he substitutes Nebuchadnezzar, who imposed the law of servitude. He claims that the double measure received in the place of the punishment inflicted, which

* * * * *

[980] Isa 40:5; Jerusalem stands for the church because she is a feminine personification, *eam* (*ecclesia* is a feminine noun), and she is all-inclusive because all flesh shall experience her liberation.

[981] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 737:33–738:2 / LW 33 218

[982] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 737:19–32 / LW 33 217–18. Erasmus argues from the Septuagint Greek translation that *malitia* is the correct Latin translation.

[983] Rom 6:23

to God in his mercy seemed huge, is the grace given by God as a reward for sin and not keeping the Law. For this is what Luther says in his *Assertion*: 'What will they say here? He says grace is not given by the Lord except for sins, that is, for evil deeds.'[984] It would have been more tolerable if Luther had said that sins were exchanged for justification and that by means of grace piety took the place of ill will. Moreover, he assumes that God was forced to take away the Law, which no one could keep, although the gospel does not take the Law away but fulfils it. For instead of 'Thou shalt not kill' it says 'Do not be angry,' and instead of 'Do not perjure yourself' it says 'Do not swear at all.'[985] He likewise claims that there was no grace under the Law and that no one kept it.[986] Now even if we admit that the double measure given by God refers, not to punishment, but to grace and innocence freely given by faith in the gospel and by baptism, that still does not conflict with free will. And *Discussion* does not deny that God sometimes gives his grace not because of preceding merits but because of those that will follow; doubtless he gives it to those in whom he knows his grace will not be fruitless. Finally in embracing grace when it knocks, free will does something; likewise when it cooperates willingly and does not turn away.

He seizes upon the text that *Discussion* brought up in passing: however true it is that where sin abounded there grace abounded all the more, nevertheless it does not follow that 'before the infusion of sanctifying grace man cannot, with God's help, prepare himself for divine favour by morally good works.'[987] 'I would be surprised,' he says, 'if *Discussion* is expressing an idea of her own and not one she plucked out of some sheet of paper sent or received from someplace or other and stuck in her own book. For she neither sees nor hears what her own words mean.' Bravo! How invariably our hyperbolist is true to himself! And he goes on prattling: 'If sin abounds through the Law, how can a person prepare himself by morally good works? How can works do any good when the Law does not? Or what else does it mean that sin abounds through the Law except that works done according to the Law are sins?'[988] First of all, *Discussion* did not mention the

* * * * *

[984] *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 144:6–7 / CWE 76 304; 'they' are 'these Pelagians' (143:22–3 / 303).

[985] Cf Matt 5:17, 21–2, 33–4.

[986] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 737:33–738:29 / LW 33 218–19.

[987] Rom 5:20; *A Discussion* CWE 76 60

[988] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 738:30–739:1 / LW 219–20

Law in that place, but rather she used the words of Paul to make a general point, granting at the same time the interpretation of those who explain 'received a double measure' as meaning that innocence is doubled by grace, that is, not only are sins forgiven but also justification is bestowed through Christ. For the example of the centurion Cornelius which follows makes it clear that I am not talking specifically about the Jews, since Cornelius did not belong to the Jewish people. And it often happens that those who had been notorious sinners, such as the idolatrous gentiles, tax-collectors, and prostitutes, show God's grace as even more resplendent. Nevertheless, that does not keep others from preparing themselves for justifying grace, as we read in the case of Cornelius.[989] This is what was meant by *Discussion*, who 'neither sees nor hears.' As for his gibe about a sheet of paper sent to me, would that I were so fortunate as to be able to have the assistance of the learned in this business. For the very fact that especially deters me from writing is that I am forced to undertake this business entirely on my own. What does Luther see or hear? That the Law does no good? Then there are a pack of lies in that one psalm 'Happy are they who are blameless on the road.'[990] For the disobedient and the incorrigible the Law not only does no good but it even hinders them. But what is the meaning of that strange enigma 'Works done according to the Law are sins'? In what category, then, will he place works done against the Law? Can works be done according to the Law without grace?

Furthermore, he is offended because I added 'with God's help,' and he cries out, 'Are we arguing about God's help or about free will?' Who could endure this disputant, who spits in the face of his opponent at every single word? For here also '*Discussion* has nothing but contempt for the case she is arguing. Hence she snores and yawns.' If Luther had any faith in his own cause – and he wants us to think it is the finest – he would not interrupt his pleading so often with utterly scurrilous insults.[991] How can we argue about free will without also mentioning grace, through which and with which it works? How does Augustine argue? Does he not qualify his language in the same way?[992] Indeed the very point that *Discussion* makes as she snored and yawned is in Augustine. For he posits a certain middle condition between the lack of justification and perfect justice when a person strives, as it were, for justifying grace through good works, and at this point he brings up the very example of the centurion that Luther ridicules here.[993] The adherents of Scotus say that without any particular grace a person can go that far,[994] and I am free to make use of their opinion if I wish; nor have I condemned it. Augustine prefers the teaching that in this transition only preparatory grace should be present, not justifying grace.[995] Moreover, as for Luther's contention that Cornelius was truly justified before being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit, let him quarrel with Augustine rather than *Discussion*. But where did Luther read that Cornelius is said to be just and God-fearing?[996] In Acts 10[:2] he is said to be 'religious and God-fearing.' This is the way the fellow who never snores cites texts. For there is such a thing as false religion, and fear is not always joined with charity. Paul was religious and God-fearing when he persecuted the church of God. But who ever said Cornelius was justified without the Holy Spirit? – though in fact there is such a thing as human justice, which becomes unjust when the rays of the gospel shine on it. If someone attributes preparatory grace to him, does he deprive him of the Holy Spirit? Which is more absurd, to consider him justified without the Spirit or to consider him justified without Christ? He revered God and prayed; he had heard nothing about Christ. Even the Jews were not justified without faith in Christ. But what was the meaning of that vision?[997] That Cornelius was truly justified? Did it apply only to Cornelius or rather to all the gentiles? Did it signify that all the gentiles were already clean or rather that God destined them to be received into the grace of the gospel? For to the Jews 'unclean' does not apply to what is defiled by sin but to what they consider loathsome as, for instance, they call forbidden food unclean, and what it is wrong to touch they call unclean, and a woman during the time of her menstrual flow they call unclean, even if she is pious. Isn't this a beautiful refutation of Luther's, even without the intervention of Augustine's authority?

---

[989] *A Discussion* CWE 76 60; Acts 10:4

[990] Ps 118:1

[991] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 739:1–3 / LW 33 220

[992] That is, by adding the idea of God's help

* * * * *

---

[993] *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 7.12 PL 44 969–70 and *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum libri duo* 2.2 PL 40 111–12

[994] That is, strive for grace by doing their best in performing morally good works. See *A Discussion* CWE 76 28–9 nn103–5.

[995] That is, that striving after justifying grace by good works also requires preparatory grace. See *A Discussion* CWE 76 30.

[996] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 739:5–22 / LW 33 220

[997] That is, Peter's dream in Acts 10:9–16. Peter is ordered to eat all sorts of animals. When he protests that he does not eat unclean food, a voice tells him: 'It is not for you to call profane what God counts clean.'

I deliberately pass over a good deal or there would be no end to our debating, or rather wrangling.[998] We come to the passage 'All flesh is grass, etc.'[999] Here he once more spits on Jerome and declaims commonplace complaints about weariness, although he demands that we have stomachs strong enough to devour such outrageous distortions of Scripture, so many paradoxical arguments, so many asides and digressions, so many sneers and insults that he is intolerable even to his own supporters. But let us return to the grass and listen to this sophist playing the fool at the top of his bent. Jerome interprets 'flesh' as the weakness of the human condition, the 'spirit' as the wrath of God. *Discussion* reports this accurately.[1000] Now listen to this amazingly witty sophist. 'Doesn't the wrath of God have anything else to dry up but that wretched and weak human condition, which it ought rather to lift up?'[1001] Where now is the claque to applaud this play-acting? Hasn't our soldier performed neatly and elegantly?[1002] He pretends not to notice what *Discussion* adds, 'which is powerless against God,' indicating a person who is puffed up with his natural gifts and rises up against God; and the power of God withers this pride, just as the south wind withers the grass and the flowers. Isn't Luther extraordinarily witty? Wait; he adds something even more witty: 'But this is even finer: "The flower of the grass is the vainglory aroused by material good fortune. The Jews gloried in the temple, circumcision, sacrificial victims; the Greeks, in wisdom." Therefore the flower of the grass and the glory of the flesh is justification through works and the wisdom of the world. How does it happen then that justification and wisdom are called material things by *Discussion*?'[1003] This is another bit of wit. But at the same time he blends my opinion with my quotation of Jerome's view. Up to a point I summarize Jerome as follows: 'For here Jerome understands "spirit" as meaning divine wrath, "flesh" as man's natural weakness, which is powerless against God, and "flower" as the vainglory aroused by

* * * * *

[998] In particular, he passes over Luther's argument that Cornelius had the Holy Spirit even though he was not baptized (that is, his prayer and almsgiving were inspired by grace and were not merely moral acts). If Cornelius did not have it, according to Luther, then John the Baptist, his parents, Christ's mother, and Simeon, who were not baptized, were also without the Holy Spirit. See *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 739:18–22 / LW 33 220.

[999] Isa 40:6–7

[1000] *A Discussion* CWE 76 60, quoted shortly below

[1001] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 739:23–35 / LW 33 220–1

[1002] Erasmus alludes to Luther as playing the part of the boastful soldier in Plautus' play of that name. See n320 above.

[1003] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 739:35–740:3 / LW 33 221; *A Discussion* CWE 76 61 material good fortune.'[1004] To the opinion of Jerome I add my opinion, which is closely related to his and which concerns trusting in sacrificial victims and philosophy.[1005] But what Jerome means by material goods his words make clear, as follows: 'And indeed if you take into account the fragility of the flesh and that in the moments of our hours we grow and decline, etc.' And right after that: 'Someone who was once an infant is suddenly a boy; the boy is very quickly a young man,' and other words to that effect.[1006] To Jerome's items *Discussion* added something more elevated, which is neither identical nor incompatible with them but rather differs in degree rather than in kind. For everyone knows that the observances of the Jews were material and that the justification which sprang from them was fleshly. Such is also the self-confidence of the philosophers, which rests on human grounds and knows nothing of the heavenly Spirit. In order to find an opportunity for slander, Luther turns the temple, the foreskin, and sacrificial victims into justification through works, and he is outraged that this justification and wisdom of the world are called material – though I did not say this – even though he himself grants that the whole man and whatever is most spiritual in him is nothing but flesh, even though Paul very often calls human wisdom wisdom of the flesh and calls the observation of material rules a fleshly justification. In Romans 8[:7] he says, 'The wisdom of the flesh is hostile to God.' And in 2 Corinthians 1[:12]: 'Not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God we lived in this world.' In other places he calls this wisdom 'the wisdom of this world.'[1007] And James calls it 'animal,' distinguishing it from spiritual wisdom.[1008] And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews mentions 'the rules of fleshly justification.'[1009] The rest is too silly even to recount.

Now let us listen to the hyperbolic doctor. 'The grass is the people; the flower of the grass is the glory of the people.' When he sets the people, that is, the whole human race, over against God, isn't he referring to the weak and feeble and those who vainly set their glory up against God? Tell me, you sophist, what is the difference between the weak human condition and weak mankind? But, to avoid wasting time with such trifles, let us grant that all mankind is hay or grass and that its flower is whatever a person has through his natural powers. What will he make of this? 'That whatever a person has is an evil impulse.'[1010] For this is what *Discussion* denies. And yet she does not scoff at Philip,[1011] whom she does not name. And if she were scoffing at him, would there be any danger in that? Is it wrong to disagree with Philip? Even so, see how I refer to him in restrained language: 'If anyone maintains that the highest powers of human nature are nothing but flesh, that is, evil impulses, I will gladly agree – if he can demonstrate his assertion with evidence from Holy Scripture.'[1012] But Luther cannot stomach even this restrained allusion to him, with no mention of his name, so proud is he that such a genius has made himself his slave – a fact which is a source of no little grief to many people, and that not without reason. Would that Luther had not involved in his tragedy such a happy talent, born for the highest intellectual pursuits. I agree that what is highest in man withers if it struggles against the word of God; but if it submits to God's word it will bloom into eternal life. Peter also explains the language of the prophet as metaphorical: 'All flesh is grass and all its glory is like the flower of the grass.' But he applies it not so much to any and all parts of human nature as to corrupt impulses. For it is preceded by the text 'making your souls chaste in charitable obedience,' and it is followed by 'putting away, then, all malice and all deceit, etc.'[1013] If Luther, as a hater of figurative language,[1014] delights in departing from the literal sense as little as possible, he should approve of the following interpretation: 'All flesh,' that is, everyone not reborn for heaven, 'is grass,' that is, something earthly, paltry, momentary. 'The grass withers,' under the breath of God's spirit, either by the infliction of disease or old age or some other calamity or, with Luther's permission, punishment. For here I will not insist on that ironclad rule by which Luther taught us that the word 'spirit,' whenever it is applied to God, means kindness,[1015] lest God's kindness might be thought to wither mankind. When the grass is withered, the 'flower,' that is, any glory that is insubstantial and momentary, 'falls.' But if the grass is grafted onto Christ, it becomes a fruitful tree that never withers, for the

---

[1004] *A Discussion* CWE 76 60

[1005] *A Discussion* CWE 76 60–1

[1006] *Commentarii in Esaiam* 11 (on Isa 40:6–8) CCSL 73 457:25–30

[1007] 1 Cor 1:20, 2:6

[1008] James 3:15

[1009] Heb 9:10

* * * * *

[1010] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 740:12–31 / LW 33 221–2.

[1011] That is, Melanchthon, whom Luther accused Erasmus of insulting; see *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 740:32–5 / LW 33 222. On Melanchthon see *A Discussion* CWE 76 14 n41 and *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 101 n32 and 103–4 nn44–5.

[1012] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 61 and n292.

[1013] 1 Pet 1:22–2:1; Isa 40:6–8 is quoted at 1:24–5.

[1014] *Misotropos* in the Latin is a transliteration of μισοτρόπος.

[1015] See 567 above.

simple reason that 'the word of the Lord abides forever.' Peter indicates this when he says, 'reborn not from mortal but from immortal seed through the word of the living God who abides forever.' And he had touched on the fruit of this tree earlier: purity, obedience, charity, brotherly love, innocence of heart.[1016]

Who, then, could tolerate it if someone attributes the word 'flesh' even to a person purified by grace and takes 'flesh' to mean 'wicked impulses'?[1017] I say nothing of the Virgin Mother, who we believe was free from all fleshly impulses, or the prophets or John the Baptist. I think that even today many are living who lack wicked impulses. For it is one thing to hate God and quite another to love him less than we ought; the one springs from wickedness, the other from human weakness. Now even if we make some allowances here for original sin and the remaining effect of it, our inclination to evil, or for the troublesomeness of our nature, certainly Peter is calling to mind the fruit of evil grass, commanding us to put off all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander.[1018] Just as most people were defiled by these vices before receiving grace, so too I do not think they were all equally corrupt. Otherwise, if every person has wicked impulses, the person who cried out against them also has wicked impulses. Luther will say he means a person devoid of the Spirit. Quite the contrary, he teaches us in the very book to which I am responding that Satan reigns unchecked in those who are not reborn, and in those who are he reigns under the reign of the Spirit because even in holy persons 'the flesh lusts against the Spirit.'[1019] If 'flesh' means 'wicked impulses' and wickedness is contempt for God, does it not follow that those who are reborn have wicked impulses? But if an inclination to sin is wickedness, then an inclination to do good is piety. And then we will posit that there is piety even in adults who are not baptized simply because they have an inborn, temperamental propensity for virtue. The gentiles worshipped Jupiter, whom they called the best and the greatest, because the seeds of religion had been planted by nature, although they went wrong in choosing the person to worship and the manner of doing so. Accordingly, when 'flesh' is taken literally, it means that part of the body consisting of soft tissue which encases the bones and tendons. By synecdoche it is taken to mean the whole body; thus those who exist in their bodies are said to live in the flesh. Again, by synecdoche it is taken to mean the

* * * * *

[1016] 1 Pet 1:22–3

[1017] See 568 above.

[1018] 1 Pet 2:1

[1019] Gal 5:17; see *A Discussion* CWE 76 37 n149, 84 n391, 85 n396 and 383–4 above.

whole person: 'And all flesh shall see the salvation of God'; 'And the word was made flesh'; so too in this place, 'All flesh is grass.'[1020] For the Jews call man 'flesh' figuratively, as Latin-speakers call him 'a mortal' and Scripture calls all men 'the whole creature.' For using the generic for the specific makes the language more intensive.[1021] Sometimes it signifies 'weakness' or a 'human impulse,' which at times is merely natural, at times inclined to defectiveness. But not all defectiveness is wickedness, and not all inclination to wickedness can be called wickedness.

[*Reason, spirit, and the flesh:* τὸ ἡγεμονικόν *and the virtue of the pagans*]

'You have,' he says, 'the Scripture you require.' What is it? Isaiah 'cries out in a loud voice that a people devoid of the Spirit of the Lord is flesh.'[1022] I hear him. But I do not hear that everyone has wicked impulses; I do not hear that they are devoid of the Spirit. For right before this we learn that their sins are forgiven.[1023] The prophet makes no exceptions, but by the word 'flesh' he means mankind, and he makes this judgment about all mankind, declaring it is nothing by comparison with God, as we shall show soon. 'But I myself am denying what I declare.'[1024] What do I declare? 'That the glory of the philosophers is the flower of the grass.' Why not? Their wisdom is fleshly. It is no wonder if their glory is like the flower of the grass by comparison with the word of God. Why is it fleshly? Because it is bestial, adulterated, and in many corrupted by evil impulses. And nevertheless those so corrupted have a certain lofty mental faculty which reproaches them; I call this τὸ ἡγεμονικόν, that is, 'the ruling faculty.' But Paul divides man into three parts, the body, the soul, and the spirit, designating as spirit what the philosophers call τὸ ἡγεμονικόν. But it is clear that in Scripture the word 'flesh' is used in various ways, as I have just shown. *Discussion* touched on this point in passing to exclude the notion that the whole man is nothing but flesh even after he receives grace.[1025] And then how does John argue against me? He says that 'persons born of God become sons of God'; he says that 'what is born of the flesh is flesh, what is born of the spirit is spirit.' And Paul distinguishes a fleshly from a spiritual person,

* * * * *

[1020] Luke 3:6; John 1:14; Isa 40:6 and 1 Pet 1:24

[1021] Erasmus Latinizes ἐπίτασις here.

[1022] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 740:35–6 / LW 33 222; cf Isa 40:6–8.

[1023] Isa 40:1–2

[1024] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 740:37–741:2 / LW 33 222. 'I' refers (somewhat illogically) to Erasmus. See n388 above.

[1025] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 61 and n288.

and he calls those reborn in Christ 'a new creation.'[1026] Why does *Discussion* cite these texts? Clearly in order to refute the wicked dogma that even after the infusion of grace a person is nothing but flesh, that is, wicked impulses. Nor do I immediately grant that the ruling faculty in man is flesh, even if many who are corrupted by vanity and other passions have loved what belongs to the flesh. 'But John divides man into two parts, flesh and spirit.'[1027] Quite the contrary, he transforms the whole man from flesh into spirit. Otherwise, what does it mean 'to be reborn' or 'to become a new creation'? And Luther joins two reigns, one of Christ and one of Belial. But since all these points are figurative, they do not have much weight in a serious question, for allegory is often uncertain and does not correspond at all points. But where is that spirit in a person that does not savour of the flesh, since Luther teaches that the whole person, even after being given justifying grace, is nothing but flesh and can do nothing but sin, so much so that, even though God works in him like a workman in his shop and upon his material, he still cannot do any good deed. 'But what is not born of the Spirit is flesh.' I grant it. 'Therefore it is nothing else but flesh; therefore it is completely wicked.'[1028] I do not agree. If he grants that 'flesh' means something imperfect and inclined towards evil, I will grant that the whole person is flesh, not because all human impulses are vicious but because there is no part of man that does not need the help of grace, including his reason, will, memory, sensitive appetite.[1029] Nevertheless, everything perceived by reason is not immediately wrong, nor is everything chosen by the will wicked, nor is everything shunned or sought by the sensitive faculty an offence.

Here he digresses once more into a commonplace, raging against me and also against all those who are not convinced by this text and do not grant that free will does not exist. And he charges me with sly dissimulation, claiming I pretend to want to be instructed by Scripture, though there is nothing I want less.[1030] I beg you, what did *Discussion* ask to be taught about? Whether a person not yet reborn is flesh and one who is reborn is spirit? Quite the contrary, she set this text and others like it against Luther's

* * * * *

[1026] *A Discussion* CWE 76 61–2; cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 741:3–10 / LW 33 223.

[1027] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 741:5–7 / LW 33 223. Both Erasmus and Luther are citing John 3:6.

[1028] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 742:3–21 / LW 33 224–5

[1029] A technical term in scholastic philosophy, referring to emotions and sensual drives

[1030] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 741:14–18 / LW 33 222

dogma, which teaches that a person, however reborn, does nothing but sin. These are the words of *Discussion*: 'If the whole person, even though reborn through faith, is still nothing but flesh' – and 'flesh,' as he claims, means 'sin' – 'where is the "spirit born of the spirit"? Where is the "child of God"? Where is the "new creation"? I would like instruction on these points.'[1031] Where, pray tell, is the dissimulation in these words? Does he think that I am persuaded to hold such an absurd opinion, one he himself does not hold consistently, sometimes saying that a people without the Spirit is flesh, that is, wicked impulses, sometimes asserting that a person, however justified, is nothing else but flesh and can will nothing else but to sin? If the flesh sins and likewise the spirit which coheres with the flesh, what is there in a person who is reborn that can be called spirit? If it is not part of a man, how can he be said to be reborn? This was the point on which *Discussion* wished to be instructed with evidence from the Scriptures. Accordingly, what reason was there here for his declamation against the Jews, who deny that Scripture proves what is taught by Christ and the apostles and the whole church, against heretics, who cannot be taught anything, against papists, sophists, and Arians, Proteuses and Vertumnuses, against those who drop what they have in hand and write a dissertation on the Trojan war?[1032] What reason but that he is chock-full of such insults?

He bears down on me because I deny that *τὸ ἡγεμονικόν* is flesh. I still deny it, at least in the sense that Luther calls it flesh. But this point, which he is so eager to prove, I had almost conceded. He does not prove what I pressed him to demonstrate but merely asserts it.[1033] But under full canvas[1034] he sails against the philosophers, who did not even know of God (making a liar of Paul, who wrote the opposite),[1035] and did not strive at all to do what is moral, although they handed down so many very pious precepts, such as that only wickedness is bad, that only virtue is good, that a good man does not repay injury with injury, that the morally good is to be sought for its own sake; and concerning the nature of God and concerning the rewards and punishment of the pious and the wicked they taught a great deal that is compatible with Christian dogma. Here once again I am an unbeliever and the atheist Lucian is dragged in. Who would not find this absurd? Erasmus, who sides, if not splendidly at least sincerely, with

* * * * *

[1031] *A Discussion* CWE 76 62

[1032] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 741:14–742:3 / LW 33 224

[1033] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 742:15–19 / LW 33 225

[1034] *Adagia* IV vi 1

[1035] Rom 1:19

the orthodox, with the church, with the holy Doctors of the church, believes nothing and is an atheist. And Luther, who twists Scripture into such condemned dogmas, understands Scripture and reveres it. He demands that I name someone who performed any of the deeds I mentioned; or if they did perform them, they did so for the sake of glory. Certainly no suspicion of vainglory has fallen on Socrates or Epictetus or Aristides or Cato of Utica. And it is possible that others were better than Socrates and the others I mentioned. But to avoid being long-winded, let us imagine that none of them performed such deeds – and I had not assumed they did; but the very fact that they saw what is to be sought and wrote about it with such care and not without feeling, as Seneca certainly did, makes it clear that they had a certain knowledge of morality and a propensity towards it.[1036] But if the flesh is an inclination towards baseness, certainly that part of the mind with which they saw these things and judged they should be sought and to a certain extent aspired to them, that part could not be called flesh.[1037] Naturally, I would not allow any gifts of the philosophers to be compared with the gifts of the Spirit of Christ. And yet the actual good that was in the philosophers was the gift of God, as Paul says, 'for God revealed it to them.'[1038] And perhaps some did not lack the particular grace that leads to justification.[1039].

'But whatever the Romans did that was right,' he says, 'they did it for the sake of glory.'[1040] There was no suspicion of vainglory in the philosopher Marcus Antoninus, not even in Aristides, as I just said, or Phocion or

* * * * *

[1036] On Lucian see *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 105 and n56. Socrates (b 469 BCE) is of course the well-known protagonist of Plato's dialogues. Epictetus (fl c 100 CE) was a high-minded moral philosopher. Aristides of Athens (d c 468 BCE) and Cato of Utica (b 234 BCE) were statesmen admired for their devotion to principle. Seneca (b 5 BCE) was, next to Cicero, the most famous Roman moral philosopher.

[1037] *A Discussion* CWE 76 62

[1038] Rom 1:9

[1039] The most famous example was the emperor Trajan, who, because of the prayers of St Gregory the Great, was taken out of hell and finally saved. The story was very widely known because it was included in the life of Gregory in *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine trans Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger, 12 vols (London 1941) I 184–5. But it was also discussed by scholastic philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas; see for example *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi* IV, dist 45 a 2 q 1, 4 and *Summa theologiae* III suppl q 71 a 5

[1040] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 742:27–743:15 / LW 33 225–6.

Epaminondas or Cato of Utica or Brutus.[1041] But let us grant that they were not entirely free from a desire for praise. That fact does not rule out virtue. Don't the theologians recognize two aims for one and the same moral act, one primary, the other secondary, as, for example, when a preacher who is paid a salary works long and hard to teach the people? If someone reverses these aims, he sins. But it can be praiseworthy for someone to seek praise, as, for example, if a pastor strives to gain a good reputation, favour, and authority among men by the integrity of his life, by his words and deeds, only in order to do his duty with more success. Similarly, I think many pagans did noble deeds, both publicly and privately, primarily because they thought that was the moral thing to do, and they would have done the same even if there had been no statues or inscriptions; but they nevertheless also had it in mind that they were leaving behind examples of virtue for their family and adherents and would stir up others to emulate their good deeds. Then, too, those who taught that the pattern of all moral behaviour springs from the mind of God, whom, under whatever name, they understood to be the highest good and the source of all good, in teaching that virtue was to be sought for its own sake, were certainly attributing the glory of good deeds to God and not claiming it for themselves. But I would readily allow Luther to rage against the philosophers if he did not proclaim the same things about those who are reborn through the Spirit.[1042] If he does not say so, how does someone sin when he does what is best? Indeed, when whatever the justifying Spirit does in him would be sinful, and fatally so, if God's mercy did not come to the rescue? I would be glad, then, if Luther would explain to us how his teachings are consistent with each other: on the one hand, that no human work is good but that the justified man sins in all his works, however good, and on the other that a person who is reborn through the Spirit fulfils all God's commandments and thus is capable of everything.[1043] For in this book he hands down this second teaching, ridiculing *Discussion*, who he thinks is ignorant of what is well known to everyone else.

* * * * *

[1041] Marcus Antoninus (b 121 CE), better known as Marcus Aurelius, was both a benevolent Roman emperor and a famous Stoic philosopher. Phocion was a fourth-century BCE Athenian statesman and man of principle, executed by the mob. Epaminondas was a fourth-century BCE Theban statesman and heroic general. Marcus Junius Brutus was the high-minded, first-century BCE leader of the opposition to Caesar's dictatorship.

[1042] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 743:16–744:29 / LW 33 226–8

[1043] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 744:30–745:19 / LW 33 228–9

There is no need for me to explain the figure of speech by which the fleshly is called flesh and the spiritual is called spirit. It is clear that what is imperfect and weak is sometimes called fleshly, as I have already shown from the testimony of the apostles and the example of the Corinthians. But Luther asserts that 'whoever is without the Spirit of God is said to be wicked. For Scripture says that the Spirit is given precisely to justify the wicked.'[1044] Therefore, when the apostles received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, were they transformed from wicked to justified? But Jesus had earlier breathed the Spirit into them, and before he did that he said that they were clean because of the speech which they had heard.[1045] There are, then, levels of justification, and the Spirit works in various ways in mankind. But Luther never withdraws from extremes. If in fact the Spirit excludes flesh as fire does water, and if it makes a person spiritual, how does a justified person become spirit if he is still nothing but flesh, so much so that he cannot avoid hating God and his neighbour and, in brief, can do nothing but sin? If the whole man when he is not yet justified is flesh, that is, wicked, then the whole man when he is reborn will be spirit and will be free of wickedness – which is contrary to Luther's dogmas. 'But flesh cannot see the kingdom of God.' If you take 'flesh' to mean 'wicked,' I grant it; but if you take it to mean 'crude and imperfect,' I deny it. The apostles were fleshly, and yet they were upright by Jewish standards. If Christ had been born much later, would they have been foreign to the kingdom of God? I think not. And such were many Jews whom God in his goodness nevertheless received into eternal life. We should think the same, I think, about the disciples whom Paul found at Ephesus;[1046] they had been baptized with the baptism of John and commanded to believe in Jesus, but they were completely unaware that there is a Holy Spirit. If no one had taught them any better, I think God would have taken their simple faith in good part. But when Christ came he provided a certain loftier doctrine, which could not be understood by people who were taken up with evil impulses or were at least ignorant and not yet illuminated by the gift of faith; for he calls this evangelical doctrine the kingdom of God. And though I will permit such crude people, as perhaps Nicodemus was, to be called fleshly, I would deny that they belong to the kingdom of Satan.[1047] 'Is there, then,' he says, 'some middle ground between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan?'

* * * * *

[1044] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 743:16–32 / LW 33 226–7

[1045] John 20:22–3; John 13:10

[1046] Acts 19:1–8

[1047] On Nicodemus see John 3:1–15, 7:50–2, 19:39.

Why not? Because Satan rules in the very wicked, the Spirit rules in the perfect, and in between are the vacillating, the beginners, and those still considering defection. Otherwise, if Satan reigns wherever there is sin, John the Evangelist, speaking of the pious, denies that anyone is free of sin.[1048] And the learned have pointed out that Paul does not say, 'Let not sin be in your mortal body' but rather 'Let not sin reign there.'[1049]

I have not yet decided whether my opponent is more silly for wasting his time and ours in such trifles or I am more stupid for dignifying such nonsense with a response. Listen to this bit of supersophistical trash: '*Discussion* grants that not every human impulse is flesh, that is, wicked, but she demands that we allow that a part contrary to the flesh, which the philosophers call reason and she herself calls the spirit, is sound and upright. But oh, what a tragedy of disasters,' he says, 'springs from this concession: we cheapen Christ's blood because it redeems only the lowest part of man, and the highest part has its own strength and does not need a redeemer, so that from now on we preach Christ as a redeemer not of the whole person but only of the lowest part, namely the flesh, but man himself is the redeemer of his higher part,'[1050] and so on with more of the same. Who would not rather listen to the braying of an ass than to this debater, if this can still be called debating? Who ever said that reason is absolutely sound and upright? I merely denied that this faculty is completely wicked in all men. Apart from that, reason often makes bad judgments by mistake. Certainly it is not so undermined by habitually vicious living that it should appear to be completely eliminated – which is what happens to those whom God hands over to a reprobate understanding. Didn't *Discussion* discuss this in the beginning and say it in this very passage? Didn't she interject these very words: 'Corrupt reason, it is true, often has poor judgment';[1051] it is not only dimmed but often too weak to be able to control the passions, and though it sees what is better it follows what is worse.[1052] When *Discussion* sang this song, Luther turned a deaf ear. But how tiny is the good that human reason has if it is compared to the Spirit of Christ! But Luther does not know any other way to extol the glory of our redeemer except by making man into a Satan or something even more wicked than Satan, if such there

* * * * *

[1048] Cf John 8:31–6.

[1049] Rom 6:12

[1050] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 744:3–14 / LW 33 226–7

[1051] *A Discussion* CWE 76 61

[1052] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7.20–1: ' . . . video meliora proboque, / deteriora sequor' ('I see the better course and approve of it; I follow what is worse').

be.[1053] He does not remember that even the good that remains in mankind is a gift of Christ, who is so kind that he does not begrudge his gifts even to the ungrateful and the wicked.

Mankind owes an immense debt to their redeemer, who frees them from hell, shines upon them with the light of faith, inflames them with the fire of charity, transforms them into sons of God. He does not extinguish the good he finds but perfects it; he does not destroy nature but completes it. He arouses the sleepy, setting right what is depraved, making up for what is lacking. If reason struggles against emotions that are prone to immorality, then it must needs be that to some degree it discerns and approves of what is moral. The scholastics call this faculty synderesis, though I hardly know where they got the name.[1054] It remains even in the most wicked. Otherwise how could it happen that persons who have not yet sunk so deep into the abyss of evil that they revel in the most wicked deeds are so displeased with themselves when they do something wrong? Why are adolescents so ashamed when they are caught red-handed? What is the source of the pleasure felt by a person who has saved someone's life or helped his neighbour through some extraordinary kindness? Even the pagans wrote about such feelings, and today even worldly persons experience them. In the comedy Phaedria is upset with himself as his reason struggles against his vicious inclinations. He speaks as follows: 'Living, I knowingly and deliberately am dying. I must drive this softness from my mind. I am too self-indulgent.' You are listening to the spark of reason. So too in tragedies, when Medea or Procne are preparing to kill their children, natural affection tells them one thing, anger another. How fiercely does the language of Myrrha and Byblis inveigh against the flames of incest in their heart? We see the same thing in Dido, whose reason says: 'But I would rather that the earth swallow me up, etc' and 'before I would violate you, O chastity, and loosen your claims.' A good many passages like this are found in the poets, for they know human emotions most deeply and depict them most skilfully.[1055]

* * * * *

[1053] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 744:17–18 / LW 33 228

[1054] To the scholastics synderesis meant the immediate, innate grasp of axiomatic principles of right and wrong. Popularized by Peter Lombard, the term can be traced back to a mistranscription of a word used by St Jerome to mean 'conscience'; see Thomas Mautner *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford 1996) 419–20.

[1055] Phaedria feels pangs of conscience in Terence's *Eunuchus* 73. For Medea's revulsions see Euripides *Medea* 1021–48. For Procne, who fed her son to her husband in revenge for his rape of her sister, see Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.600–46. For the self-recrimination of the incestuous Myrrha and Byblis, see Ovid *Metamorphoses* 10.319–55 and 9.474–535. For Dido see Virgil *Aeneid* 4.24–7.

Why was there such applause and cries of approval in the theatres of the pagans whenever some glowing example was presented or lines were spoken proclaiming extraordinary loyalty to parents or country, unassailable chastity, incorruptible faithfulness? Why was there such an uproar against the person who was reciting some verses in praise of gold, so that the actor would have been hissed off the stage if the poet had not stood up and advised the people to wait and see what sort of end that admirer of gold would come to. You will say: it is easy to applaud or hiss. But what about the tears shed by grown men at the sight of extraordinary examples of virtue? Don't such instances make it clear that the seeds of virtue are deeply seated in mankind and that they reveal themselves when they are stirred up by some incident? This is the point of Plato's myth about souls having fallen from heaven into their bodies, so that, when the souls perceive sensible pictures of something beautiful, they are moved to remember that supreme beauty.[1056] And if we believe the Peripatetics, the emotions, which to the Stoics are diseases, were given to us by nature as goads to virtue[1057] for those in whom reason is not yet full-fledged, as when anger acts as a spur to fortitude and justice, envy leads to the emulation of good deeds, mercy to relieving the oppressed, the love of children to providing a liberal education. What is it, then, that flashes forth so brightly when it is aroused but the highest faculties of reason deeply seated in all mankind? This spark remains even in the most depraved. Balaam wants a way out for the Israelites.[1058] After he had betrayed the Lord Judas acknowledged his crime and punished himself.[1059] In such great wickedness natural reason was still alive. And so there is some faculty in mankind which is not altogether lacking in moral awareness.

Now look, if you will, at Luther's hyperboles and also at his tricks. When *Discussion* first deals with philosophers, that is, pagans, she teaches that reason, that is, the principal part of the soul, has certain inclinations towards morality. But what the philosophers call reason or τὸ ἡγεμονικόν Paul calls the spirit, and what they call πάθη or disordered emotions Paul calls the flesh. Feelings in between the two, that is, purely natural feelings, he calls the soul, as in 1 Thessalonians 5[:23]: 'that your spirit may be sound and your soul and body without complaints, etc.' The spirit loves

* * * * *

[1056] Plato *Phaedo* 75 and 100

[1057] Erasmus made the same point in *Enchiridion* CWE 66 44 and in *Moriae encomium* CWE 27 104. See Aristotle *Magna moralia* 1.5.1–2, 1.7.1–4; *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.2.7.

[1058] Num 22:7–21

[1059] Matt 27:3–5

what it knows is pleasing to God; the flesh pursues vengeance, pleasure, the honours of this world; placed in between, the soul bends towards either side and it turns towards the one it is devoted to. To love our wives, to care for our children are acts we have in common not only with pagans but even with brute beasts. If we guide such feelings according to the will of God, they belong to the spirit. If we neglect God's commandments out of love for wife or children, that love belongs to the flesh. Luther mixed these things up. For the philosophers do not use 'spirit' to designate the highest part of the soul, but rather 'mind' or 'reason.' Paul does not designate as spirit just any sort of reason whatsoever but rather reason inspired by grace. For whenever Scripture speaks of evil persons, it takes spirit to mean the urges of the flesh.[1060] You have the trick. Now here are the hyperboles. *Discussion* said that there is a certain tendency towards morality even in pagans.[1061] Luther takes this to mean that pagans have a faculty which is totally sound and has no need of a redeemer, as if this tendency of nature were perfect and could do whatever would otherwise be performed by the grace of Christ, 'so that man is exalted above Christ and the devil, that is, becomes the god of gods and the lord of lords.'[1062] This is the sort of monstrosity he generates with his hyperboles. For if reason, even though darkened by original sin, still sees something as if through a fog and still has some tendencies, though ineffective, towards morality, and then if it is mostly forced to succumb to the weight of passions, does it immediately follow that all of human reason has no need of Christ? He pretends not to see these facts, which I discussed from the outset.[1063] There are seeds of virtue in man's mind, however corrupt they may be. Is the whole mind of man therefore completely sound, clear-sighted, free, all-powerful in judging, choosing, accomplishing whatever it wishes? Such are the enthymemes that give Luther his victories. And 'what happened to the probable opinion,' he says, 'that free will can not choose anything good?'[1064] I do not say anything different here; throughout *Discussion* I follow the opinion of those who say that the human will is ineffective in achieving salvation without grace. So too now I grant that a striving for morality and the seeds of virtue remaining in man need the help of divine grace. In fact, though, those very seeds flow from the generosity of God, as does the whole person. Let him go on now and shout his melodramatic verbiage like someone out of his mind.

[1060] That is, if reason or soul turns to the flesh it becomes not good spirit (reason inspired by grace and turning to true spirit) but flesh, and it is the opposite of true spirit; thus in evil persons it is spirit, but the spirit is evil.

[1061] *A Discussion* CWE 76 61

[1062] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 744:3–20 / LW 33 227–8

[1063] *A Discussion* CWE 76 60–1

[1064] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 744:21–2 / LW 33 228

He adds something absurd. 'I say this,' he says, 'so that you may see once again how dangerous it is to undertake sacred and divine subjects without the spirit of God, in the temerity of human reason.'[1065] All the Doctors of the church are carried away by the temerity of human reason; Luther is led by the spirit of God! The olive has no seed; the nut, no shell.[1066] After such trifles he triumphs. 'And so,' he says, 'if Christ is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, it follows that the whole world is subject to sin, damnation, and the devil, and the distinction between principal and non-principal parts makes no difference. For "world" signifies persons who savour of the world in all their parts.'[1067] What does he do here but stoutly assert? I confess that in worldly men there is nothing that does not need grace, but I deny that whatever a person wishes or does by his natural powers is wicked. Whatever is wicked is death-dealing; but whatever is dead is not necessarily death-dealing. I also grant that man has nothing pure if you compare him to the purity of God, no wisdom, no ability, no significance. The church is content with this profession, but it is not enough for Luther.

In extolling the magnitude of grace so forcefully, he makes man into almost a Satan, in the same way as unskilled painters highlight some features by darkening the surroundings, at the same time not understanding that when he exaggerates God's grace in one respect he diminishes it in another. For even whatever is left in mankind from its natural condition – and magnificent gifts are left, as is shown by the discovery and perfection of so many areas of study, so many examples of splendid exploits, so many precepts for living a good life – whatever is left comes from the goodness of God. And so when Luther makes a person not yet reborn into nothing but flesh, that is, wicked, it follows that someone reborn through the Spirit is nothing but spirit. As it is, Luther makes even someone who is reborn almost totally into flesh. When *Discussion* demands to be told how someone who has been born as a spirit through the Spirit still remains flesh, he is sufficiently insolent in his scoffing, denying that such an idea is to be found

* * * * *

[1065] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 744:24–5 / LW 33 228

[1066] Horace *Epistles* 2.1.31; the saying became proverbial for those who insist on what is obviously false (*Adagia* I ix 73).

[1067] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 744:25–9 / LW 33 228

among his dogmas.[1068] But when he teaches that a person, however justified, in every one of his works, however good, does nothing but sin – and mortally at that, if mercy did not render the offence only venially culpable – is he not teaching that even a person who is reborn, that is, justified, is nothing but flesh, which is always sinful, and flesh to such a degree that the Holy Spirit working in him can accomplish nothing but sin because of the faulty material, as a skilled workman with a bad axe produces bad work or makes a useless vessel out of crumbling material? And so as far as the person himself is concerned, however reborn he may be, he is totally flesh and does nothing but sin. From this it follows that he is totally flesh, and that the Spirit and Satan reign in the same person, but Satan is dominant, since he does not permit the Spirit to do any good work through his human instrument. What if in this very passage he grants this, speaking as follows: 'Then we say that a person who is reborn is no longer flesh except for some vestiges of flesh which fight against the first fruits of the Spirit he has received'?[1069] If the vestiges are so powerful, even after the reception of the Spirit, that a person who does some work, however good, and tries with all his might to do good, still sins, and even mortally in so far as his nature is concerned, is he not granting that the whole person is nothing but flesh? What are the fruits of the flesh but sins? If something, then, is the source of nothing but sin, what else can it be but flesh?

Let him go on now and scoff at me as if I were profoundly ignorant of the matter or as if my mind were so overwhelmed and confused by the magnitude of the subject that I hardly remember what I have said either in my favour or against my opponents. And this charge is levelled against us by a fellow who absentmindedly contradicts himself so often in his writings, sometimes even in the same article; though many have pointed this out, even in published books, he very wittily pretends it is not so and makes fun of others with his pointless jokes. Now this fellow is also upset because in *A Discussion* I declare that I intend to rely on the authority of the ancient Doctors for my belief that the seeds of virtue are planted in the minds of mortals until someone teaches something more reliable. And to him I seem not to be concerned about religion because I believe in men.[1070] Is it the case that whoever believes in the highly regarded Doctors of the church believes in men, but whoever follows Luther and Wyclif has God for his leader? And is what the ancients cite from Scripture a dream, while Luther's interpretation is an oracle? Do not such notions spring from some remarkably pleasant self-love?[1071] And then, although the religion of the church has stood firm for so many centuries, adoring and glorifying its leader Christ, now finally, in the last ages of time, is he going to instil in us concern for religion?

[1068] *A Discussion* CWE 76 62; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 744:30–745:6 / LW 33 228–9
[1069] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 744:8–10 / LW 33 229
[1070] *A Discussion* CWE 76 62; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 744:11–19 / LW 33 229

But before I leave this passage, I must notify the reader that this discussion of man's flesh and spirit is almost outside the limits of the subject. For it is clear that when Isaiah cries out, 'All flesh is grass,' flesh signifies simply mankind, as it did earlier in the same chapter: 'All flesh alike shall see what the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'[1072] Grass signifies a weak and evanescent creature, who can do nothing against God his creator, even though he strives with all his might, with his power, wisdom, false religion, magical arts. At the same time this passage also provides comfort for his people to keep them from being afraid of the idols or kings of the gentiles when they threaten harsher punishment, as if they could hinder God from freeing his people, provided they have God on their side. For the gentiles will not prevail if God does not wish it. .And Isaiah makes the gentiles afraid to engage in futile rebellion against God, who created and rules all things at his pleasure, and keeps them from trusting in their false gods but rather makes them fear him who at his mere nod can reduce all things, no matter how strong, to nothingness. But by the flower of the grass he means trust placed elsewhere than in God; by the spirit which breathes on it, the power or vengeance of God put forth against them. For he immediately explains what he had expressed here through a comparison: 'And indeed their stem is neither sown, nor planted, nor rooted in the earth. Suddenly he blew on them and withered them, and a whirlwind will carry them away like chaff.'[1073] In chapter 39[:5–6] the Lord predicted through Isaiah that the wealth of King Hezekiah would be handed over to Babylon. This happened in spite of the Jews' vain attempts to prevent it. Here he predicts the return from Babylon and the rebuilding of the temple and the city as well, though many tried to prevent it. And this subject matter is treated to the same effect for many chapters, which also contain a prophecy of Christ's coming and the renewal of the church through him. But what does all this have to say against free will? 'Something,' Luther says, 'is allowed to mankind in

* * * * *

[1071] Erasmus here Latinizes φιλαυτία (*Adagia* I iii 92). Philautia appears as one of Folly's handmaids in *Moriae encomium* CWE 27 89.

[1072] Isa 40:6, 5

[1073] Isa 40:24

which they can glory.'[1074] Quite the contrary, he is allowed something for which to thank God, since what a person has is a gift of God. Otherwise a stupid and wicked person can glory in other natural gifts: beauty, health, strength, intelligence, memory. But it is possible to glory in the Lord even concerning these, for to glory in this way is to give him thanks for his generosity. In this way the orthodox Fathers gloried in free will as something left in man by God which is either capable of grace or can merit it, though at the same time they were not unaware that the whole man is in God's control. And what good does it do to take away free will lest there should be something in which to glory, since it is possible to glory in grace and people in general take inordinate pride in it. To avoid this pride they did not need to be taught that there is no free will, just as we do not persuade those gifted with exceptional intelligence that they do not have any intelligence, but rather they should be admonished that free will is a gift of God and that if we do not use it well we are liable to eternal damnation.

[*Does divine providence remove free will? Jeremiah 10:23*]

He defends his passage from Jeremiah 10: 'I know, Lord, that a man's path is not his own, etc.'[1075] It is a good thing I did not[1076] cite Jerome; otherwise I would have been thrashed. But still, without mentioning his name, he takes to task some man of great authority, I hardly know who.[1077] And yet I am told, 'It is enough: Erasmus says so; therefore it is so.' And he demands that I show the meaning of the prophet from the progression of the passage itself.[1078] It shall be done, if he will deign to pay attention. The prophet had shown there was no need to be afraid of the pagan gods of stone and wood, so that they would not fall away from the worship of the living God, which they had professed up to this point. In doing so they were certainly better than the pagans, although in other respects

* * * * *

[1074] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 744:3–17 / LW 33 227–8.

[1075] Luther cited Jer 10:23 (quoted in full shortly below) in *Assertio* article 36. Erasmus argued in *A Discussion* that it applies to the happy or sad outcome of events rather than to the power of free will. See CWE 76 62–3.

[1076] The Latin has *quod citaram* 'that I had cited,' but in fact Erasmus did not cite Jerome on this passage, and the sense requires that *non* be added.

[1077] Luther had ironically referred to Erasmus himself as a person of such authority that he had no need to pay attention to the meaning and intention of the prophet (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 745:24–6 / LW 33 230). Erasmus understood that but deliberately took the occasion to refer ironically to Luther's customary contempt for authorities in interpreting Scripture.

[1078] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 745:20–8 / LW 33 229–30

their various sins made them deserve the anger of God, which afflicted them through the Babylonians, and even greater evils seemed to be imminent. But he acknowledges that the chief cause of the evil is the wickedness of their shepherds, that is, of their leaders, who did not place their trust in God but rather in false prophets, soothsayers, and their own might. And so it happened that the people were afflicted. And then Jerusalem, acknowledging the magnitude of her guilt and fearing final destruction, abandons that trust and takes refuge in the mercy of the Lord, saying: 'I know, O Lord, that a person's path is not his own and that it is not in a man to walk and direct his steps,' that is: 'It is not in our power to avoid falling into afflictions or to emerge from them and prosper. This is in your power, O Lord, who know what is best for a man. We acknowledge our guilt and we do not refuse to endure the chastisement of your hand. This only do we beg from you, that you temper your just wrath with mercy, lest perchance you should reduce us to nothingness.' Here you have a gloss which does not distort but arises from the very drift of the language itself. St Jerome seems to apply these words to the Babylonians, adding this comment: 'What we suffer at the hands of the Babylonians does not result from their fortitude but from our deserts and your anger.'[1079] Compare our interpretation, reader, with chapter 10; you will see it fits to a T.[1080] Compare Luther's; you will see that it is totally violent and rigid.

But granting that the passage pertains to a happy or sad turn of events, he argues thus: 'If the outcome of temporal events, the lordship of which was handed over to man (Genesis 1), is not in our control, how can that heavenly grace of God be in our control?' And here he digresses into a commonplace, even bringing in Codrus.[1081] To put it in a nutshell: it is not merely a matter of amount, but of quality. The welfare of mankind does not depend on external events. Indeed, sad events are often more useful than happy ones. It is quite different in matters on which the eternal welfare of mankind depends. We read that many innocent people were tortured

* * * * *

[1079] *In Hieremiam prophetam libri VI* 2.95–6 CCSL 74 110

[1080] Literally, to a nail's breadth (*Adagia* I v 91)

[1081] Luther presents a series of parallel rhetorical questions based on the idea that if great power cannot perform something then lesser power also cannot. He caps it with 'as if you should say, Codrus cannot pay a penny but can pay numberless thousands of gold coins' (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 745:33–746:12 / LW 33 230–1). For Codrus as proverbial for poverty see *Adagia* I vi 76. On the meaning of 'commonplace' see n866 above.

and killed because God willed it so, but only from Luther do we learn that those who do not deserve it are cast into hell. Moreover, we often read in Scripture that men's endeavours turned out differently than they planned, as with Joseph and the Pharaoh, or the Jews when they tried to eradicate the name of Jesus, but in these same Scriptures we read that the will of wicked men, who perished through their own fault, was to blame; we find nothing about Luther's necessity. Moreover, who said God's grace is in our control? He himself dispenses his own gifts, as Paul says: 'He distributes to each just as he wishes.'[1082] But we say that such is God's goodness towards the human race that he does not want his grace to be lacking to anyone unless the person himself turns away from it. And even what man can do by his own natural powers is a grace. How this debater here makes everything into hyperboles! A man can obtain grace if through his free will he makes himself available to impelling grace; 'therefore,' he says, 'he has God's grace in his control.'[1083] Quite the contrary: therefore God is kind and just and does not damn anyone unless he deserves it. A similar hyperbole is this: 'I am surprised,' he says, 'that *Discussion*, who up till now has so fiercely attacked Wyclif's idea that everything happens by necessity, now herself concedes that for us the outcome of events is necessary.'[1084] How wearisome it is to debate with such an idle babbler![1085] If someone guzzles down strong wine, he has it in his power to become drunk. If someone throws his money away, he has it in his power to be poor. But when I say that what a person plans does not always come about, Luther infers that it never does so. But imagine that in such matters we have no free choice. What does that have to do with our present subject matter, from which we have excluded the outcome of events?

St Jerome used this passage to reject those who agreed with Pelagius. 'Newfangled preachers,' he says, 'who say that everyone is guided by his own choice should be ashamed of themselves.'[1086] Therefore I did indeed concede that we interpret the words of the prophet as applying to free will, but I denied that they prove necessity, since 'no one denies that without God's grace none of us can steer a straight course in life. For we also pray every day, "Lord my God, guide my steps in your sight." Yet we continue to do the best we can by ourselves. We pray, "Lord, incline my heart to your

* * * * *

[1082] Cf 1 Cor 12:11.
[1083] Erasmus is not quoting Luther directly but merely anticipating his usual response.
[1084] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 746:12–14 / LW 33 231
[1085] See n211 above.
[1086] *In Hieremiam prophetam libri VI* 2.96.2–4 CCSL 74 110

testimonies." One who asks for help does not give up trying.'[1087] At this point, though Luther has absolutely no notion of what *Discussion* is driving at, he still clowns around like an utter buffoon. 'I beg you,' he says, 'is he ridiculing us or making fun of the papists?'[1088] It is not surprising that the fellow plays the fool like this, but it is surprising that he never gets enough of such tomfoolery. In that passage *Discussion* refers to a person already enlightened who cannot steer a straight course in life without the help of grace and therefore constantly begs for such assistance yet continues to do the best he can himself, undoubtedly by means of free will. In fact, if a justified person cannot persevere or perfect anything without grace but at the same time free will does not cease, it follows that the words of Jeremiah do not exclude free will. For the word 'guide' implies help, not necessity; and 'is not in our power' makes it clear that grace cooperates with our will. 'The point to be proved,' he says, 'is whether we strive by our own power, and she proves that when we pray we make an attempt.'[1089] Is it strange for someone in difficulty to implore God's help? A ship's captain controls the sails and the helm, at the same time hoping that God will give him wind, which is not in his control; he busily contributes what is within his power. In the meantime I will overlook the strange dogma he mingles in here, that it is not we who pray but the Spirit within us.[1090] Let us imagine that *Discussion* was talking about a person devoid of grace: does not a person still in a state of sin nevertheless pray oftentimes? And is it not trying if someone solicits God's grace by almsdeeds or spiritual reading, whether by his own natural powers alone, if we believe the scholastics (whose opinion I have never rejected and am more ready to embrace than Luther's) or with the help of impelling grace, according to those who are more inclined to emphasize God's grace? In fact, though, if anyone calmly examines the matter more closely, there is very little difference between the two opinions.

[*Proverbs 16:1, 21:1*]

As for the text in Proverbs 16, 'It is for man to prepare his heart, etc,'[1091] *Discussion* had replied that this too refers to the outcome of events.[1092] Here Luther asks for an authority,[1093] and whenever I name one, he scourges him

* * * * *

[1087] Ps 5:19 and 118:36; *A Discussion* CWE 76 63 nn300–2

[1088] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 646:22 / LW 33 231

[1089] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 746:21–2 / LW 33 231

[1090] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 746:23–6 / LW 33 231

[1091] Prov 16:1

[1092] *A Discussion* CWE 76 63

[1093] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 746:32 / LW 33 231

with insults. But the drift of the passage is in favour of what I propose. 'It is for man to prepare his heart, but the government of the tongue is from the Lord.' For what the author is driving at there is that a person should not rely on his own powers and neglect the help of grace, without which man can accomplish nothing completely. Thus the apostles, when they were pleading their case before magistrates, kept their minds responsive to grace; the Lord governed their tongues. In preparing there is room for free will because it does not turn itself away from grace; but God governs the outcome of what is said according to his plan. God requires that we do our part; he wants the outcome to be left to him. But if our heart is good, the outcome, whatever it may be, cannot be unhappy. If our heart is bad, wickedness will cause its own disappointment. Hence what follows: 'All the ways of men lie open to his eyes; the Lord is a weigher of spirits.'[1094] The outcome, then, will correspond to the heart. And therefore he warns: if you want a happy outcome, manifest to the Lord a sincere heart and do everything you do as if he were witnessing it. 'Reveal your works,' he says, 'to the Lord, and your thoughts will be guided.'[1095] What he formerly expressed as 'prepare your heart' he now expresses as 'reveal your thoughts.' Luther has the only thing he accepts, a meaning drawn from the progression of the passage. But what can you do with such a debater? If you cite an authority, he seizes the occasion to slander him. If you do not cite one, he makes fun of a dream spun out of my own head. Then with great authority he brings out his own interpretation, twisted at his own good pleasure.

Here once more he triumphs with a syllogism such as this: 'If freedom of choice in our own affairs and works is nothing, much more is it nothing in the affairs and works pertaining to God.'[1096] Who, I ask you, said that there is no freedom of choice in human works? I said that the outcome of such affairs does not always depend on our choice. Does a physician lack free will in healing because the person he hoped to revitalize passes away? And this is the disputant who is always poking fun at the sharpness of *Discussion*. She had said: 'How can it be for man to prepare his heart, since Luther affirms that all things are done by necessity?'[1097]

* * * * *

[1094] Prov 16:2

[1095] Prov 16:3

[1096] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 746:34–5 / LW 33 232: 'Cum libertas arbitrii in rebus et operibus nostris nulla est, multo magis nulla est in rebus et operibus divinis.' The last four words could be taken to refer to God's own actions, but in context they clearly refer to human actions in relation to God.

[1097] *A Discussion* CWE 76 63

This sharp fellow replies: 'Since the outcome of events is not in our control, how does a person have an effect on events?'[1098] I reply in turn, since quarrel we must: if someone gives his son money to buy a codex of the Gospel and the son uses it to hire a whore, did the father freely choose to give it or not? Luther will say that he did, for he grants there is free will in such matters. Nevertheless the outcome was a disappointment. How, then, was it within his choice to give the money? Luther is so sharp that he does not distinguish the action of doing something from the outcome. And if it is for a man to prepare his heart, it follows that some part of this event is located in free will. But if God necessarily prepares the heart and governs the tongue, the author would have said, 'It is for God to prepare the heart and govern the tongue.' Here Luther digresses on the commonplace that we labour all the more attentively because the outcome of events is uncertain – as if I were arguing that we do not. But if he is talking about the outcome as it applies to eternal salvation, he is running out of bounds,[1099] for *Discussion* is not dealing with that. Actually I would have been more inclined to attribute a firm confidence rather than certainty to a pious man. He cites Ecclesiastes: 'Sow your seed in the morning and in the evening do not cease, etc.'[1100] But here the author is using imperative verbs, which state no facts in Scripture.[1101] But why is a man encouraged to do something if he is never active but merely passive? If imperative verbs state nothing except that it is impossible to do what is commanded, why does he infer from the verb 'sow' that a person must work? But he imagines he has handled the matter neatly by making this distinction: 'Our knowledge of them,' he says, 'is uncertain, but their outcome is necessary. Necessity puts the fear of God into us, to keep us from being presumptuous and overconfident. But uncertainty makes us confident, so that we do not despair.'[1102] The strongest supporters of free will grant that one of two outcomes must occur: to be sure, a person will either be saved or perish. That fact, then, is enough to instil fear even if we accept free will. But who ever said that uncertainty makes us confident? Perhaps it rules out final despair, even though Paul is certain that 'a crown is laid up' for him, if I may here in passing point out the inconsistency of the

* * * * *

[1098] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 746:37–747:1 / LW 33 232

[1099] Literally, 'outside the olive trees,' for the boundaries of racecourses were marked by a row of olive trees (*Adagia* II ii 10)

[1100] Eccles 11:6; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 747:3–4 / LW 33 232

[1101] See 389–91 above and Luther *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 677:17–27 / LW 33 127.

[1102] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 747:2–7 / LW 33 232

Lutherans.[1103] But who will be more active and eager, someone who is persuaded that whether or not he sows, a crop will be harvested if God wills it, or someone who believes that without his effort there will be no harvest but that if he labours the favour of heaven will not be withheld? Again, which man will be more eager in the pursuit of high office, someone who knows that the king means to give it to one of the two whether he deserves it or not, or someone who believes that the king will give it to the one who has worked hardest to make himself worthy of the king's favour? The rest is so stupid that I do not wish even to recount it.[1104] And I have to hurry along to keep from boring my reader to death.

Now when he defends that text from the same chapter, 'The Lord made all things for his own ends etc,'[1105] I wonder why he is so loath to grant that God creates a wicked person, since earlier he frankly granted that God produces wicked men every day;[1106] but he was talking, I suppose, about the continuous operation of God in keeping things going. And so this is how we will interpret 'he made the wicked person,' that is, he operated in the wicked person, 'for the day of disaster,' that is, he created wickedness 'for the day of disaster.' But how much simpler is *Discussion*'s explanation! The prophet had said earlier: 'Reveal your path to the Lord and your thoughts will be guided,'[1107] that is, let your heart be sincere in the sight of the Lord and he will provide a favourable outcome. This pertains to the pious. But what follows pertains to the wicked: 'The Lord made all things for his own ends, even the wicked man for the day of disaster'; just as the former part pertains to the nature of things and to what is good, so the latter applies to the wicked, who do not reveal their path to the Lord but believe they can take their own counsel to get where they want to go. But an unhappy outcome lies in wait for them, for the Lord manages the outcome of events in such a way as to turn even the malice of the wicked to the glory of his goodness and justice and also to the advantage of his chosen souls, whom he makes more cautious by punishing others. For by 'day of disaster' he means a bad outcome. And *Discussion* derives this interpretation from the

* * * * *

[1103] 2 Tim 4:8; the instance of Paul argues against the Lutheran position because Paul is both confident and certain; he needs no uncertainty to make him confident.

[1104] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 747:7–15 / LW 33 232

[1105] Prov 16:4, cited by Luther in *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 144:5–6 / CWE 76 305; see *A Discussion* CWE 76 63. Luther replied to *Discussion* in *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 747:16–20 / LW 33 232.

[1106] See *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 709–14 / LW 33 175–84.

[1107] Prov 16:3

drift of the language itself, not naming any authority lest Luther be stirred up to blasphemy. What force, then, does this passage have against free will? The plans of the wicked have an unhappy outcome. Does that mean they did nothing of their own free will?

In the next section, where he defends that text from Proverbs 21, 'The heart of a king is in the hand of the Lord,'[1108] he merely asserts. He is offended by the word 'coercion,' for which he often berates *Discussion,* singing his refrain about the distinction between necessity of coercion and of immutability,[1109] which is not found in the writings of any theologian, as I made clear before.[1110] But he himself did not shy away from this word 'coercion' in his *Assertion,* where he says this: 'Who dares to deny that even in wicked deeds he has often been coerced into doing something different from what he intended.' And here, where he grants that the heart of a king is violently swept along to do one thing or another in such a way that he cannot take another course of action, he cannot put up with the word 'force,' especially since he brings up the example of Balaam, who was forced to say something different from what he wanted to say. Even though this example is unique, he asserts that unless we allow it to apply universally, no scriptural examples will stand up. Moreover, the fellow is upset because *Discussion* said that very many examples of this sort could be collected from Holy Scripture, especially from collections of sayings,[1111] which, by a convenient interpretation, can be used to support either side.

[*'Without me you can do nothing' (John 15:5) and similar passages*]

At this point an opportunity immediately opens up for him to rant and rave against the rhetoricians, who teach the art of distorting Holy Scripture, though there has never been anyone who treated it more violently than he. There is also some underlying anger or special hidden meaning in the name Luther, which he repeats so often in a mimicking way, as if it were not correct to name him without an honourable title.[1112] If he is angry when he is called 'Luther,' what would he do if I designated him

* * * * *

[1108] Prov 21:1, cited by Luther in *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 145:12–14 / CWE 76 305; see *A Discussion* CWE 76 63; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 748:8–10 / LW 33 234.

[1109] See *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 747:22–748:7 / LW 33 233.

[1110] *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 188; 512–13, 517 above

[1111] Erasmus here Latinizes γνωμολογίαις.

[1112] In this passage (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 748:8–10 / LW 33 234) Luther twice refers to himself in the third person as 'Luther,' mocking *Discussion,* who normally refers to him simply as Luther, not as Master or Doctor Luther.

by the titles others have given him, unless perhaps he is pleased when Eck changes 'Luther' to 'Ludder'?[1113] Though he himself so often plays the buffoon, mocking 'Lady Discussion,' he cannot bear to be called simply 'Luther.' What a fastidious attitude! But because he went so badly astray in identifying the speakers in *Discussion,* I was forced by the nature of the problem to stick in the name Luther from time to time to keep him from ascribing his own ideas to Paul. He says that up till now I have not defeated any common soldier, though apart from two or three passages there was nothing worthy of a reply.[1114] But what mortal has ever refuted a single one of Luther's opinions, even one that he spat out in jest?[1115] So majestic are his oracular pronouncements! And so we come at last to Luther's Achilles, of which he boasts so much in his *Assertion.* Here he first assails *Discussion* for trying to claim the glory of being the first to teach that 'nothing' means 'what is in itself of no importance.'[1116] Where did he get that idea? Because I do not name any authority? But Luther does not put up with that. And so I support what I say with scriptural texts,[1117] for that is what he himself demands. And even if I had not read such an idea in other authors, why such a big fuss if I pick it out of Holy Scripture, since everyday language also has this figure of speech? I am ashamed to report the fellow's outright lie, where he pretends that '*Discussion* has only one aim

* * * * *

[1113] The German word *Luder* means 'carrion,' 'wretch,' 'beast.' Eck had changed Luther to Lud(d)er in the titles of three of his Latin books: *Ad criminatricem Martini Luders ... offensionem ... Eckiana responsio; Quia hactenus abusus est Mar. Luderus modestia Eckiana: tandem extorsit, vt mordaci, mordaciter quoque responderem ...* (Augsburg 1519); *De primatu Petri adversus Ludderum* (Paris 1521); and *Asseritur hic invictissimi Angliae regis liber de sacramentis, a callumniis & impietatibus Ludderi* (Rome 1523). He also called Luther 'Martin Luder' in a German pamphlet defending the Council of Constance against Luther published in 1520; see *Vier Deutsche Schriften gegen Martin Luther, den Bürgermeister und Rat von Konstanz, Ambrosius Blarer und Konrad Sam* Corpus Catholicorum 14, ed Karl Meisen and Friedrich Zoepfl (Münster in Westfalen 1929) 1–18.

[1114] Luther had opened his denial of free will with John 15:5 in his *Assertio* (WA 7 142:31–2 / CWE 76 301; see also *A Discussion* CWE 76 64–5 and n310, where the reference to *Adagia* should be corrected to I vii 41). In *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 748:14–19 / LW 33 234 Luther claimed Erasmus had not only not defeated his Achilles but had not even overcome a single common soldier.

[1115] The Latin 'ludens' plays on the name 'Ludder' given to Luther by Eck; see n1113 above.

[1116] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 748:19–25 / LW 33 234, referring to *A Discussion* CWE 76 64–5

[1117] *A Discussion* CWE 76 64–5

in mind, to make all of Scripture ambiguous, so that she may not be forced to use it, and to make the authority of the ancients certain, so that she may use them. A wonderful religion indeed: the words of God are useless; the words of men, useful.'[1118] What a hodgepodge of lies he has heaped up here! Not even to be afraid that whoever has read my *Discussion* will immediately understand that the fellow has no shame! I will pass over the rest of his absurdities and nonsense, though we have to proceed from one bit of nonsense to another. For he presents us with nothing else in this whole work.

Now *Discussion* is inconsistent. How so? Because she grants that 'nothing' can be taken to mean 'a little' or 'something imperfect.'[1119] The words 'a little' and 'something imperfect' are not in my *Discussion*, but this buffoon made them up to provide an opportunity for some witty tomfoolery. Here is the passage in *A Discussion*: 'But in my view it can be parried in several ways. First, in common usage we say that a man achieves nothing if he does not reach his goal; and yet someone who makes an effort often gets somewhere. In this sense it is absolutely true that we can do nothing without Christ, for in that verse he is speaking of the fruit of the gospel, granted only to those who remain on the vine which is Christ Jesus.'[1120] That is what *Discussion* says. I call the fruit of the gospel the preaching of the apostles, which subjected the world to Christ. The Lord calls himself a vine, his disciples shoots which will spread the spirit of the gospel far and wide. This is what is meant by the text in the Gospel 'that you may go and bear fruit and that your fruit may abide.'[1121] The spreading of the shoots is the discourse of the apostles, first in Jerusalem, then in Samaria and the neighbouring territory, then throughout all the regions of the world, as they presented what they had drawn in from the main stem of the vine. But there were some who preached the gospel insincerely, for the sake of glory and gain, not remaining on the vine; and for that reason their preaching did not bear abundant fruit. Paul makes it clear to the Philippians (1[:17]) that there were such persons: 'But some announce the gospel of Christ dishonestly, out of contentiousness, etc.' For the aim of the apostles' preaching was to draw the whole world to the gospel. They could not achieve this goal if they did not remain on the vine. I will say nothing at this time about heretics who corrupt the teaching of the gospel; the Lord tries to frighten his followers

* * * * *

[1118] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 748:30–5 / LW 33 234–5

[1119] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 749:1–7 / LW 33 235

[1120] *A Discussion* CWE 76 64

[1121] Seemingly a conflation of John 15:5 and 8 away from what they do. Those, then, who do not achieve the goal are said to be able to do nothing.

With equal tomfoolery he interprets 'not' for us:[1122] 'so as to signify the fruit of the gospel apart from Christ.' And from this he makes some monstrous inferences which distinctly smack of the spirit he has in his heart, though they are so absurd I am ashamed to report them.[1123] I would laugh if he injured only me. As it is, I see how great is the danger for mortals who entrust their souls to such a spirit and what an affront it is to Scripture when it is handled by a fellow with such an unbridled mind and tongue. For I consider it my special glory to be treated by such a person in such a way. I am sorry that this pus was concealed for so long, for it would have freed me from a great burden of ill will, and this uproar would, I think, have swept up fewer persons. But lest I should seem to be saying this without good grounds, I will report one of his clever bits: 'If "nothing" and "not" signify "a little" and "something imperfect," we will also interpret in this way the text "and without him nothing was made," that is, a little was made; or "the fool says in his heart, 'There is no God,'" that is, God is imperfect; or "He himself made us and we did not make ourselves," that is, we made ourselves a little bit.'[1124] Aren't these the words of an idle and frivolous, but evil spirit? But in fact, as I said, *Discussion* does not mention 'a little' or 'something imperfect.' All she said was that in everyday usage a person is said to do nothing if he does not carry out what he planned, as, for instance, if an ambassador does not get the treaty he was trying for, he is said to have done nothing, and yet he did all he could to get it.

He snips and snaps at me, mocking me because out of modesty I present my response as follows: 'In my view it can be parried in several ways.'[1125] 'You needed to prove,' he says,'that it should be so taken.'[1126] It is no wonder that Luther doesn't like modest language, since he positively asserts everything. But is a proposition any less true because it is expressed in modest language? Is whatever Luther says true simply because he asserts it so arrogantly, conceding nothing to the judgment of others, not yielding an opportunity to speak to a prophet who gets up after him?[1127] Moreover, he thinks he is very witty when he makes fun of convenient

* * * * *

[1122] That is, 'not' on the vine

[1123] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 749:7–11 / LW 33 235

[1124] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 749:14–16 / LW 33 235

[1125] *A Discussion* CWE 76 64, quoted 607 above

[1126] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 749:23–9 / LW 33 236.

[1127] Cf 1 Cor 14:30.

interpretation, though *Discussion* directed this against him because he distorts everything to win the victory for his cause, and he does so not only conveniently but most shamelessly. As for me, if I do not fully understand something in Holy Scripture, I usually embrace the opinions of the ancient Fathers – which Luther proclaims to be sacrilegious, although he himself, when he is disputing, not only cites Gregory as a great authority[1128] but also proves the necessity of all things from the testimony of the poets,[1129] since he has a lower opinion of the philosophers because they assert man's free will. He shouts at me whenever I bring up a comment of Jerome, and yet he indulges himself when he bases his assertion on writers who deal in myth and fable, as if he would prove the necessity of all events by citing Virgil's line 'O Meliboeus, a god has given us this peace.'[1130] From that heap of lies I mentioned a little while ago, he repeats his assertion that the certainty of Scripture is a matter of indifference to me,[1131] while at the same time he himself spits on the interpretations of orthodox exegetes, ridicules the opinions of the universities, doesn't give a damn for the decisions of the church or the decrees of councils, however ancient, but claims exegetic authority for himself alone as he steadies men's consciences. The facts show very well how steady he makes men's consciences, since every day new sects sprout up and very many people everywhere are wavering, not knowing what or whom to believe. To be sure, the way to be certain about Scripture is this: to embrace whatever Luther proposes to us as an oracular pronouncement and to have no concern about his frequent inconsistencies! In one place he claims Scripture is perfectly clear, so that to understand it we need nothing more than grammar and common sense; in another place he proclaims that in the past all teachers, together with the church, were blind. They knew grammar; they did not lack common sense. What was the difficulty? What but the spirit of Satan, who does not dare to assail Luther. Believe me, the language of the Holy Spirit is quite different from this man's! If a crow, in its rough and harsh voice, said that it is a nightingale, who would believe it? And in another place he says that if he should ask me to define the Spirit or a miracle, I would not have even a single syllable to reply to him,[1132] though these words are in Holy Scripture, and I think I am not ignorant of grammar or devoid of common sense. But I am spending too much time on

* * * * *

[1128] See n591 above.

[1129] See, for example, *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 617:23–618:18 / LW 33 41.

[1130] *Eclogues* 1.6

[1131] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 749:20–3 / LW 33 236

[1132] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 641:21–3 / LW 33 73

this rubbish, especially since the whole world already knows this fellow's character only too well.

Now, as for his oft-repeated joke about the probable opinion, I have answered that sufficiently. The rest of Luther's ferocious discourse is irrelevant, since my view concerns the spreading of the gospel, and he is dealing with free will as it prepares for grace. Then, too, 'a little bit' and 'something imperfect' are his words, not mine. Moreover, it is clear that even dishonest teachers do some good for the gospel, though they do no good for themselves. But here the Lord is talking to those who were already on the vine, whom he exhorts to remain there, with an implied reference to Judas, who shortly before this speech had taken the morsel and departed.[1133] He warns that the same thing would happen to all of them if they did not remain on the vine. I think the same thing applies to heretics, who remove themselves from the body of Christ, which is his church. But in his *Assertion* Luther brings up this passage to prove that free will does not prepare for grace through morally good works.[1134] As for me, I simply put that opinion forward in *A Discussion*, neither approving nor disapproving of it.[1135] *Discussion*, then, was pointing out that Luther's citation from John was not apposite, since Christ was speaking to those who were on the vine, with the exception of Judas – and even that was not yet known to the disciples – and Luther applies it to a person who wishes to be grafted onto the vine by means of grace. And so he is way off target when he hurls all those insults at me, I mean those about the reign of Christ and the reign of Satan,[1136] which he always exaggerates enormously, making no distinction between those subject only to original sin and those defiled by their own wicked deeds, or between those who sin simply because of weakness and those who are hardened in malice. As for what he adds about my placing free will on the middle ground as if neither God nor the devil were present,[1137] that is, in a word, a downright lie, and here I was dealing with those who are in the kingdom of grace. But because I promise there a varied response, if this one is not fully satisfactory, he has leave to embrace another, and that was the reason I said 'in my view.'[1138] But Luther, who is himself off target, makes as great an uproar about this reply as if I had insisted it is the only one.

* * * * *

[1133] John 13:18–30

[1134] *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 142:36–143:18 / CWE 76 301, citing John 15:5

[1135] *A Discussion* CWE 76 28–9

[1136] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 749:34–750:5 / LW 33 236

[1137] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 750:5–10 / LW 33 237

[1138] See 607 above; *A Discussion* CWE 76 64.

But let us grant that these words, 'Without me you can do nothing,' pertain to those who are under the reign of Satan; let us suppose that I am to defend the opinion of Scotus,[1139] which I did not undertake to do; still these words from the Gospel do not exclude free will. For it does not follow from 'free will does nothing without Christ' that 'therefore it does nothing.' For I take 'Christ' here to mean Christ's grace. For the very things a person does through the influx of nature[1140] are the grace of Christ, without which we neither live nor have any being.[1141] Then again, let us imagine that this statement, 'Without me you can do nothing,' pertains to the pious; it does not carry any weight against free will if someone does what he does with the help of grace, which is primary, and he acts all the more because without grace he does nothing. Finally, Luther plays the fool to such an extent that he turns *Discussion* into nothing: 'In common usage,' says *Discussion*, 'we say that a man achieves nothing if he does not reach his goal; and yet someone who makes an effort often gets somewhere.'[1142] Luther reponds: 'I have never heard this said in common usage; you take the liberty of making it up.'[1143] This is the reply of someone who leaves nothing in doubt. I do not know how the Saxons speak in common usage, but Latin-speakers among us talk in such a way that, when ambassadors return from a failed mission, they say they accomplished nothing, and if they are asked about something they have decided not to reveal, they ordinarily say, 'Stop asking, you will accomplish nothing.' Above I cited authorities to show this is true.[1144] If they are not weighty enough, he should consult even his own Philip,[1145] who will confess, if I am not mistaken, that what I said is true. Who said that an effort is nothing? For Luther makes this objection; he, not *Discussion*, interprets 'nothing' as 'a little bit.' For she is not explaining the meaning of 'nothing' but rather what figure of speech we employ when we say that a person who does not accomplish what he wants does nothing. But there would be no figure if we were talking about someone unoccupied, for he is doing nothing. How delirious Luther becomes here, pouring out words with no thought behind them. But he grants that what I propose is valid. Nevertheless, that makes against free will, he says, 'because

* * * * *

[1139] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 28–9 and nn103–6.
[1140] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 31 and nn111–12.
[1141] Cf Acts 17:28.
[1142] *A Discussion* CWE 76 64
[1143] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 751:17–18 / LW 33 238
[1144] See 606 and n1117 above.
[1145] Melanchthon; see 583 and n1011 above.

it does many things which are nothing in the sight of God.'[1146] Once more free will does many things, although in his *Assertion* he declared that free will has no existence in the natural world. 'What good will his efforts do him,' he says, 'if he does not achieve what he is trying to do?'[1147] Aha! According to some it does so much good that by means of its effort it attains to grace; according to others, so much good that, if it adapts its effort to preparatory grace, it attains to justifying grace; and if it is in the realm of grace, so much good that it perseveres and attains to more abundant grace; but if it turns itself away, it loses even what had been given to it.[1148]

Indeed, *Discussion*'s citation of that Pauline text, 'Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything,' is also inauspicious. (Is any citation from Scripture auspicious if it is against Luther?) 'The word "nothing,"' according to *Discussion*, means 'things of little importance, useless in themselves.'[1149] Here Luther says: 'What? Are you saying, *Discussion*, that the ministry of the word is of little importance and useless in itself, when Paul praises it so highly everywhere, but especially in 2 Corinthians 3[:8–9], where he calls it the dispensation of life and glory?'[1150] Indeed, Luther, are you teaching us that the voice of the Evangelist is of any importance if the Spirit of Christ is lacking? Therefore, you contradict yourself. For I think you understand what 'in itself' means: that is, alone and without the accession of the Spirit, as when we say that a genus is nothing in itself unless life worthy of the genus is added to it and that a body in itself is nothing unless a soul is present in it. Here I will not examine how cleverly he quibbles by changing 'he who plants' to 'the ministry of the gospel.' Christ himself was a minister of the gospel, and the ministration of the Spirit is the very power of the gospel first displayed by Christ and then by the apostles, whose efforts were nothing if they are compared with the work of God in them. But if someone who makes an effort here is not without some magnitude, why does Paul say he is nothing? Here Luther brings in one of the utterly contemptible proverbs of the schoolmen: discourse is to be understood according to the subject matter – which he often says *Discussion* does not do. Let us listen, then, to Luther's oracle: 'In providing growth, he who

* * * * *

[1146] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 751:22–4 / LW 33 239

[1147] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 751:24–5 / LW 33 239

[1148] Cf the summary of ancient and modern views of grace in *A Discussion* CWE 76 27–33.

[1149] 1 Cor 3:7; *A Discussion* CWE 76 64. Erasmus cites Luther *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 751:27–9 / LW 33 239 a little altered.

[1150] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 751:29–32 / LW 33 239

plants and he who waters are nothing, but in planting and watering they are something, since the supreme work in God's church is teaching and exhorting.'[1151] Does our sophist have anything new to say? He who plants and waters furnishes the labour of teaching and exhorting, and by doing so he performs an honourable function, I grant it. But they cannot perform the essential part of this matter, and for that reason they do nothing in themselves, because they labour in vain if God does not give the growth. In this whole volume hasn't Luther been arguing thus: free will can do nothing without grace, therefore it is nothing; and the human will is ineffective in itself, therefore it is nothing? He adds the apodeictic assertion: 'This is what Paul means; this is what the words quite clearly convey.' 'This' is the seal of the Spirit![1152] But here he once more allows that my 'absurd example should be valid' – he is such an agreeable and compliant fellow! Nevertheless the example supports his case: 'For what I am driving at is that free will is nothing (that is, useless in itself, as you explain it) in the sight of God, though I am not unaware that the will is something and not a mere nonentity.'[1153] I'll be damned if Luther did not write this after he got up from the dinner table, except that here in passing he opens another bolthole about an order of being in the sight of God. But after he has once and for all proclaimed the necessity of all things, from highest to lowest, and declared for that reason that free will has no existence in the natural world but is simply an empty name, it is futile for this chameleon[1154] to make a distinction for us here between 'natural being' and 'being in the sight of God,' just as he earlier distinguished lordship in lower matters from that in higher matters.[1155] If he sincerely approves of the dogma of Wyclif, he should be uniformly consistent, so that I would not be forced so often to show him the issue, which he forgets not just occasionally but continually. But come on, grant that free will is nothing in itself, what does this have to do with the probable opinion? Do I not grant this in the conclusion of *A Discussion* according to the probable opinion, which attributes most to grace?[1156] In the same way the whole man also, even the whole universe

* * * * *

[1151] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 751:32–5 / LW 33 239

[1152] WA 18 751:35–6 / LW 33 239; cf John 3:33.

[1153] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 751:37–40 / LW 33 239; Luther says that a *voluntas impia* (a 'wicked will'), not merely a will, is not a nonentity.

[1154] Literally, 'Empusa' (see n487 above)

[1155] See n605 above.

[1156] That is, Erasmus grants, according to the Augustinian view, that free will is nothing in the sense that without grace it can do nothing to obtain grace, but yet it does exist as so limited by grace. See *A Discussion* CWE 76 87.

is nothing in itself, since, if the power of the deity who preserves it were withdrawn, it would collapse.

He rails at the example I brought up from Paul, 'If I do not have charity, I am nothing,' wondering for what purpose I did so.[1157] Let me tell him briefly: in order to show that a useless person is called nothing, just as a person who does not fully accomplish something is said to do nothing. And here he ingenuously grants that free will has power and acts in ordinary or natural affairs – eating, drinking, and the like – and that it also has the power to sin, even though he has so often affirmed that all things happen by absolute necessity and that free will is a name with no reality, either for good or evil. Such is the self-consistency of Luther, who says that I am never consistent with myself, even in this very passage. How so? Because I had no inkling he would here dream up a double 'being,' being according to nature and being according to grace.[1158] And at the same time he does not understand what I said about the fruit of the gospel: but even those who teach the gospel insincerely produce some fruit, even though at the same time they are not on the vine.[1159] But is Luther teaching us anything new when he shows that the grace of God has its source in God? An answer should have been given to those who assert that without particular grace it is possible to attain to justifying grace by means of morally good works. I proposed this opinion among the others, nor have I ever condemned it.[1160] Or what is new about teaching that a work which does not come from grace lacks grace? For that is all that he teaches in this tumultuous swarm of words! 'What is natural,' he says, 'is nothing in the order of being we are dealing with.' But in the meantime where has absolute necessity gone to sleep? And again, he demands an instance which proves that 'nothing' is taken to mean 'a little bit.' He concocted this idea; so let him find an instance himself. I proved what I proposed: things which in themselves carry out nothing are said to be nothing. And so someone who vainly trusts in his own powers, scorning God's grace, is said to do nothing. And because I do not show that 'nothing' is taken to mean 'a little bit' – which

* * * * *

[1157] 1 Cor 13:2, cited in *A Discussion* CWE 76 64–5; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 752:1–3 / LW 33 239. In the rest of this paragraph Erasmus summarizes and replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 752:1–753:7 / LW 33 239–41.

[1158] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 751:37–40 / LW 33 239

[1159] Cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 751:3–12 / LW 33 238.

[1160] Erasmus seems to be somewhat confused here, since the position he describes is not that of Scotus (who thought particular grace, not justifying grace, could be so obtained) but that of Pelagius, which Erasmus did condemn.

up to now I never even dreamed of doing – he declares that I 'understand nothing and do not care what Christ or grace is or what is the difference between nature and grace, though even the utterly uneducated sophists know this distinction and formulate[1161] it quite commonly throughout their universities.'[1162] But what shall we do with this brazen shyster who is shameless in assailing whomever he wants to? Didn't *Discussion* quite clearly distinguish grace from the natural influx common to everyone and didn't she subdivide the effects of different kinds of grace?[1163] And here she does not know what Christ means! And this blind *Discussion* does not see that all these examples are in Luther's favour. In what way? For John the Baptist's statement, 'that "a person cannot receive anything unless it is given to him from heaven" makes it quite certain that free will is nothing.'[1164] There's wonderful logic for you! He grants that what is received is justifying grace; he does not seem to recognize preparatory grace. Let us concede, then, that grace is sent to someone from heaven. Is there anything to prevent the will from embracing grace and acting together with it? And if a person can lose grace through his own fault, doesn't it follow that there is such a thing as free will, which can either cooperate with grace or turn away from it?

And after such wretched exploits he still sings his own praises. 'Thus my Achilles is conquered,' he says, 'when *Discussion* has handed him the weapons by which she herself, unarmed and feeble, is vanquished. Thus one word explains those scriptural texts which Luther, that stubborn asserter, brings to bear.'[1165] See the high dudgeon of the noble commander! He cannot stomach being called stubborn, as I have sometimes called him. You are honoured in other eulogies,[1166] my good man, and they know how to call things by their right names. What a splendid victory! Although you interpret words at your own whim, although you invent what you find convenient, although you reject the judgments of all orthodox teachers, universities, and councils, although you contradict yourself, snatching up now one

* * * * *

[1161] Latin *definiuerunt*, whereas Luther wrote *detriverunt* (WA 18 753:5) 'wore out, by using often' – apparently a slip on the part of Erasmus or his printer

[1162] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 752:6–16 / LW 33 240

[1163] *A Discussion* CWE 76 27–33

[1164] John 3:27, cited in *A Discussion* CWE 76 65; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 752:20–753:11 / LW 33 240–1

[1165] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 753:8–11 / LW 33 241

[1166] Latin *Aliis aliis elogiis ornaris*, where it is hard to explain the first *aliis*. Erasmus may have intended only one *aliis*, or *Ab aliis aliis*, or perhaps he meant 'by other, and different, eulogies.' I have translated as if one *aliis* is an error through dittography.

opinion, now another, although at your own pleasure you teach that Scripture says what supports your case, often distorting it with extraordinary impudence, still you are as triumphant as Achilles. You would not need to be any more brazen to be able to prove there is no free will from the Lord's Prayer,[1167] the Hail Mary,[1168] or (if you like) from Virgil's *Eclogues* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. 'Our Father.' Do you hear that? Sons are in the power of their fathers, not vice versa. Therefore there is no free will. 'Who art in heaven.' Pay attention: the heaven operates on what is below, not vice versa. Therefore our will does not act but is purely passive. 'Hallowed be thy name.' What could be clearer? If free will had any existence, the glory would be men's, not God's. 'Thy kingdom come.' Clearer than daylight at high noon! We do not come to the realm of grace through morally good works, but rather it comes to us. 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' He himself has cited this part seriously. 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Do you hear this? We are always lacking, having no good in us, but rather we daily beg for the assistance of grace. Where, then, is free will? 'And forgive us our trespasses.' You see what power free will has, clearly the power to sin. 'And lead us not into temptation.' Why, you may ask? God works both good and evil in us. Therefore there is no room for choice. 'But deliver us from evil.' From this it is clear that free will does nothing but sin. For these petitions are spoken by the justified, who would have had to be damned because of their good-evil works if the mercy of God had not delivered them. These are simply the bare headings. If we add to them the emphatic assertions, the made-up words, the amplifications, the personifications, the jeers, the insults, wouldn't we have a marvellous victory? 'Hail, full of grace.' You Pelagians, where are you? Don't you hear? The angel who brings down grace says 'Hail,' not 'Prepare yourself for grace,' and he commands her to rejoice in a gratuitous gift. And he says 'full,' so as to leave no place empty for free will. 'The Lord is with thee,' without whom you can do nothing. And Elizabeth greets her, 'Blessed among women.'[1169] Where there is a blessing, there is no free will. 'Who was exiled from the shores of Troy and was the first to be driven by fate to Italy.'[1170] Here you have the ineluctable necessity of things: he did not flee by his own decision but by sheer necessity. 'O Meliboeus, a god has given us this peace.'[1171]

* * * * *

[1167] Matt 6:9–13
[1168] Luke 1:28
[1169] Luke 1:42
[1170] Virgil *Aeneid* 1.1–2
[1171] Virgil *Eclogues* 1.6, also cited 609 above

You see that one was deprived of his fields, while the other enjoyed his own possessions.[1172] Why? Out of merit? No, rather God did it because he wanted to. 'My mind carries me away to speak of shapes changed into different bodies.'[1173] We have here not free will but a mind swept away. Such notions seem ridiculous, as they are. But in order to undermine free will Luther distorts many texts he cites far more than I have distorted these. But whenever he finds it fitting and convenient, he does his soft-shoe shuffle and claps for himself, he competes and awards himself the prize,[1174] he tells of his own exploits and awards his own triumph!

But he preens himself especially for this device: he pretends that for him *Discussion* is like a stupid little woman so that he can show what a man with natural grace and charm can do against her with his witticisms, so merry that he is bitter even when he flatters, so far from being disagreeable that he is boastful even when he puts himself down, whereas there is almost nothing in *A Discussion* that I have not drawn from reputable and ancient Doctors of the church, on all of whom those scurrilous witticisms of his fall more truly than on me. But if he finds *Discussion* so contemptible, why did he not contend with John, the bishop of Rochester,[1175] whose learning, unless I am mistaken, he does not find contemptible and whose authority brings more weight against him than *Discussion*, especially since he does not present a discussion, as I do, and he not only calls Luther stubborn – which he cannot stomach coming from me – but tricks him out in his true colours. To him Luther shuts his eyes and makes fun of *Discussion* with his idle trifles, using her as a pretext to rave against the holy Doctors of the church with the most insolent insults.

[*How free will and grace work together*]

Finally, as if he were worn out, he skips over several passages where *Discussion* made it clear that the human will does something together with the help of grace. 'What has that got to do with me?' he says.[1176] Indeed, it has

* * * * *

[1172] This fact becomes clear concerning the two speakers of Virgil's first eclogue.

[1173] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1.1–2

[1174] The Latin *saltat fabulam* means 'to mime a myth in dance and song.' The most celebrated exponent of this art in antiquity was Nero, who staged competitions and awarded himself the prize.

[1175] See n485 above.

[1176] Erasmus encapsulates Luther's claim that his similes and parables showing that human will and divine grace cooperate are irrelevant (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 753:12–13 / LW 33 241). Luther was responding to *A Discussion* CWE 76 65–74, but he was hurrying towards his presentation of his own case and does to do with the opinions I presented. One of them claimed that a person's free will is purely passive in a good deed while grace is active and that grace does not act through free will but in it. For *Discussion* presented this opinion precisely in order to refute it. But if Luther grants that the human will cooperates with grace, let Karlstadt defend his own dogma.[1177] And what could be more arrogant than to accuse *Discussion* so often of straying from the point at issue when he himself does not understand the goals I set out? But he imagines he is wonderfully clever when he ridicules the similes of the sailor and the farmer, the builder and the watchman guarding the city,[1178] though I drew them from the most reputable authorities, whom he here mocks with the impudence of a harlot. 'First of all,' he says, 'the simile attributes one work to the sailor, another to God,'[1179] as if a simile had to match at all points. But, in fact, what he says is false, for I imagine that the two are working together in saving the ship, God and the captain. But because the primary work is God's, it is all attributed to him, and he is said to have saved the ship because without him it would not have been saved. In a similar way I imagine the single work of growing crops,[1180] which is nevertheless ascribed entirely to God, without whose help the farmer would have laboured in vain. Thus a sick man who has got well says, 'God has made me well' precisely because it was God who helped the physician. And in order to create an opportunity for his jeers, this fellow, who was born to bad-mouth, misquotes the words of *Discussion*: 'For instance, God indeed saves the ship,' he says, 'but the sailor brings it into port; therefore the sailor does not do nothing.'[1181] *Discussion*'s words are these: 'just as a sailor who has brought his ship safely into port in a great storm does not say "I saved the ship" but rather "God saved it," though his own skill and hard work were not ineffectual.'[1182] I considered whatever was done to save the ship as one single work in which the grace of God's help and the energy of the man's effort were joined. Whoever brought it through safely saved it; each saved it, each brought it through. And if there were different

* * * * *

not answer every detail of Erasmus argument. In this and the next paragraph Erasmus is replying to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 753:12–36 / LW 33 241–2.

[1177] On Karlstadt see *A Discussion* CWE 76 6 n4 and 33 n123; *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 278–9.

[1178] *A Discussion* CWE 76 65–6

[1179] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 753:14–18 / LW 33 241.

[1180] That is, God and man cooperate in one undifferentiated action (*unicum* 'single'): one does not do one's part and the other something else

[1181] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 753:14–15 / LW 33 241

[1182] *A Discussion* CWE 76 65

ways of working in the work as a whole, nevertheless the simile is valid to explain what is being done. Therefore, let Luther be so good as to remember how many jobs are done by the captain before he docks the ship in the port, how many tasks the farmer undertakes before he brings the crops from the field into the barns.

And this simile, which is so stupid, so drunken, so insane, comes from Origen and Jerome – or rather from Scripture itself. Whatever jeers Luther spews out against it, he can spew out against this: 'Unless the Lord builds the house, they who build it labour in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, they who guard it watch in vain.'[1183] Why does he not proclaim here that one work is attributed to God, another to man, that the whole work of watching is attributed to man and the whole work of guarding to God? This comparison belongs to the Holy Spirit, and it is very similar to those I presented: a sailor labours in vain to save his ship unless God saves it; a farmer labours in vain unless the Lord helps him as he labours; a workman builds a house in vain unless the Lord helps him to build it; watchmen guard the city in vain unless the Lord also guards it together with them. In the first two, the effort of saving the ship is shared by God and the captain; the growing of crops is common to the farmer and God. In the other two, the building of the city is common to God and the workmen; the guarding is common to the watchmen and God. Both are said to build, both to guard. Whoever mocks the first two similes also mocks these. How much further can he go, since he has already taken the liberty of saying whatever he wants, whether it is fitting or not, against the Doctors of the church? Thus Origen is an ignorant fellow who doesn't know how to formulate similes; only Luther himself knows how to compare God with a good workman making a bad job of it with a bad axe, or with a good rider on a three-legged horse. Bravo! Such comparisons teach piety, namely that God is the source of all evil deeds. He presents us with his own examples: Paul teaching and Paul speaking in the Spirit.[1184] When Paul taught, did he not speak in the Spirit? And when his voice moves the hearts of his listeners, doesn't grace, which has the primary role, cooperate with him? Luther also assumes there are different works here. When Paul speaks in the Spirit Luther makes it one work. By 'speaking in the Spirit' Paul means merely to speak words with his voice;[1185] perhaps Luther takes 'speaking in the Spirit' to mean to have one's mind caught up. But to present the same thing as what you want to teach is not to devise similes. With such sophistical quibbles he detains his readers.[1186]

[1183] Ps 126:1. See *A Discussion* CWE 76 66 and n320; Jerome *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos* 1.2 PL 23 499D–500A.

[1184] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 753:25–7 / LW 33 242

[1185] Cf 1 Cor 12:3.

But this agreeable fellow concedes that the work is attributable to both. 'What has that to do with the issue?' he says. 'We are not dealing,' he says, 'with cooperation but with the power and operation of free will itself.'[1187] If by the power of the will itself he means 'devoid of grace,' I wonder what he is getting at. Was the one and only aim of *Discussion* to show what free will can do without grace? She did indeed present the opinion which affirms that free will can congruously earn justifying grace through morally good works;[1188] but *Discussion* neither approves nor disapproves of this view. Rather she focuses the entire debate on showing that the human will can make itself available to impelling grace or turn away from it, and likewise can cooperate with operating grace or withdraw from it. If you are looking for its own power, you have both its own and a shared power,[1189] both for good and evil. Since *Discussion* deals consistently with this issue, why does this rhetorician avoid it? He was supposed to speak about the palm of victory but talks only about a gourd; he began with a wine vessel and ends

* * * * *

[1186] It is hard to understand Erasmus' counter-arguments at the end of this paragraph without being familiar with Luther's points. The whole issue is whether God and man share in the whole work or whether one does one part and the other something else. Erasmus (and Origen) claim that the whole work is common to both. Luther gives two examples (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 753:25–7 / LW 33 242). When Paul taught the Corinthians, Paul and God cooperated but each did something different: Paul preached outwardly while God taught the Corinthians inwardly, each doing a different work. On the other hand, when Paul spoke in the Spirit both cooperate and both do the same work. Erasmus replies that the two examples are not really different, since when Paul taught he also spoke in the Spirit. And when Paul taught the Corinthians, their hearts were moved both by Paul's voice and God's grace; that is, both shared in the whole work of conversion. The second example fails because it is essentially identical with the first: to Paul speaking in the Spirit was what he did when he preached to the Corinthians, unless Luther means by speaking in the Spirit Paul's mental ecstasy, which was not actually speaking. Finally Erasmus remarks that Luther is merely giving examples of his teaching, not similes, as he and Origen had done.

[1187] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 753:36–9 / LW 33 242.

[1188] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 29 n106. The so-called Scotist position is that one may congruously earn preparatory grace, not justifying grace. But if one accepts preparatory grace, then justifying grace will be given; so perhaps it comes to the same thing.

[1189] That is, free will can operate alone or in common with grace with a water jug.[1190] He may delight in such witticisms, but he does not yet understand which opinion *Discussion* supports and which she is most opposed to. But all is well, he points out the goal: he grants that God, by means of the all-powerful motion by which he creates and governs all things, cooperates with those who perform good or bad deeds, and granting this, he makes God the author of evil works in so far as they are evil, as I demonstrated before,[1191] and he grants that a person is damned without deserving it or is saved without deserving it. 'But this is not the place to discuss such matters.'[1192] Very true, indeed! For *Discussion* is not dealing there with the natural influx of the first cause, but she provides examples showing that the human will is not idle when particular grace works in us – the point denied by Karlstadt, whose opinion *Discussion* reports.[1193]

What is he asking then? 'Whether,' he says, 'once we have been created out of nothing, we do or attempt to do anything under the general all-powerful motion to prepare ourselves to be a new creation of the Spirit. Here an answer should have been given instead of veering off in another direction.'[1194] First of all, what does he mean by 'to be created out of nothing'? To come into this world, I guess – unless perhaps, following Plato's opinion, he prefers to take the body as the dwelling place of the soul rather than as part of a human being. For one has to guess at what the prophetic language of this fellow means. By 'new creation' he means justifying grace, I think. At this point, then, he is demanding a reply to the question how a person can arrive at that grace. But *Discussion* has already replied to this very often, according to various opinions, none of which has been condemned by the church. Having forgotten all of them, he demands a reply! I have often said what the opinion of the scholastics attributes to the power of free will; I just recounted what Augustine attributes to it.[1195] And I do the same thing here by means of similes. What is this other direction Luther tells us about? In brief, he is drunk not on wine or beer but on self-love[1196] and a certain pleasure in slandering, of which he never gets enough, no matter how much he guzzles down. Listen now to his own response, since *Discussion* has no

* * * * *

[1190] Horace *Ars poetica* 21–2. Erasmus is throwing back at Luther allusions Luther had made (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 753:23–5; LW 33 242).

[1191] *A Discussion* CWE 76 75–7

[1192] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 753:35–6 / LW 33 242

[1193] See n1177 above.

[1194] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 753:36–9 / LW 33 242

[1195] See n1156 above.

[1196] See n1071 above.

answer to give: 'Just as a man, before he is created as a man, does not do or attempt anything to become a creature, once he has been made or created he does not do or attempt anything in order to remain a creature, but both these things result only from the will of the omnipotent power and goodness of God, who creates and preserves us with no help from us. But he does not operate in us without us in so far as he created and preserved us so that he could operate in us and we could cooperate with him, whether this happens outside his kingdom through his general omnipotence or within his kingdom by the special power of his Spirit.'[1197] This is what he says. He gives himself high marks for this bit of sophistry about general omnipotence, which is not agreed upon among learned men. According to some, once God has given to the secondary cause, namely nature, the power to reproduce and act, he does nothing unless for special reasons he suspends the common action of nature.[1198] But not to argue about this point, he is wrong when he assumes that a person once created does nothing for his self-preservation, since self-preservation is the very first instinct instilled by nature in living creatures. But if what he preaches is true, he relieves mothers and nurses, doctors and teachers, and even the person himself of a great deal of solicitude, for many things have to be done to protect a creature born into this world from accidents and diseases or to free them from disease. Those who commit suicide because they are weary of life[1199] are said to perish sooner than their time. Here is something of a puzzle: 'he does not operate in us without us,' but 'he created and preserved us so that he could operate in us and we could cooperate with him.'[1200] Is someone who looks after his health doing nothing? How, then, does God preserve us without us and yet he does not operate without us? But if God, moving everything by his general omnipotence, operates in man in such a way that he does not hinder his free will – and Luther grants this only in evil deeds and lower concerns – why does he set forth this proposition in order to destroy free will?[1201]

He goes on to finish up his oracular pronouncement. 'My answer,' he says, 'continues as follows: before a person is renewed as a new creature

* * * * *

[1197] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:1–7 / LW 33 242–3

[1198] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 50–1 nn226–7.

[1199] Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 7.18.11

[1200] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:4–6 / LW 33 243

[1201] Namely the idea that God does not work in us without us because we cooperate with him, as Luther has just stated – an idea that does not destroy free will in the kingdom of the Spirit, he does nothing, attempts nothing to prepare himself for that renewal and that kingdom; then, once he is recreated, he does nothing, attempts nothing to persevere in that kingdom. Both of these actions are performed only by the Spirit in us, recreating us and preserving us once we are recreated without any help from us, as James also says: "Of his own will he begot us by the word of his power, so that we might be a beginning, as it were, of his creature"[1202] (he is speaking about the rebirth of a creature). But he does not operate in us without us, since he recreated and preserves us so that he might operate in us and we might cooperate with him. In this way he preaches through us; through us he takes pity on the poor, he consoles the afflicted. But how does that attribute anything to free will? Quite the contrary, what is left for free will but nothing, truly nothing.'[1203] Here you have a dogmatic pronouncement, tricked out, to be sure, with splendid words indeed and with the true language of tragedy! – but no more true for all that. Just as it is true that a person does nothing to get born, so too it is no wonder that someone who does not yet exist does nothing or that an infant, in whom the rational soul is hidden as if he were a little plant, is preserved without any effort on his part, since he has no faculties beyond basic perceptions. But it is false that a person does absolutely nothing towards self-preservation, for reason provides that inherent, natural instinct first of all, even before a person knows how to distinguish good from evil. And if we say that a wicked person who becomes pious is reborn and becomes a new creature, as Paul says,[1204] there is no need that the comparison should match at all points, because these expressions are metaphorical. For the figure indicates that the change is violent and extraordinary, just as we also say in ordinary conversation that a person whose morals have radically changed has become another person. And so we are neither reborn without effort on our part nor are we recreated or preserved without it, even if we grant that our part is so minuscule that in reckoning up the whole we should attribute everything to God's grace, especially since whatever we have from our nature or have gained through human industry is also a benefit bestowed by God. A person is born willy-nilly, but who is said to be reborn willy-nilly? A person who is born wants to be born, in so far as he can, since he instinctively moves and twists to get out. But in rebirth the will is present, which can will or not will to be reborn. Thus Adam did nothing when he was created, for he did not yet

* * * * *

[1202] James 1:18

[1203] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:7–17 / LW 33 243

[1204] 2 Cor 5:17

exist as a person who could do anything. But a person who is recreated has a will that can make itself available to the grace that refashions it or can struggle against grace. And once a person has been recreated, he has free will, by means of which, once he recognizes the grace he has been given, he can behave in such a way as to advance in grace; but on the other hand he can behave in such a way as to lose the grace he has received, and we read that this has happened to many because they have abused God's grace. But if anyone should press the simile, no one is born twice. Yet in this life a man is reborn time after time. For Paul was in travail with the Galatians once more, until Christ was fully formed in them.[1205]

And although God can transform a person suddenly, nevertheless in imitation of nature he gradually fashions and forms a new creature of the Spirit, just as a human embryo at first is no more than a coagulated mass, then it grows and increases in size as plants do, then it acquires the power of sensation, and finally it is endowed with a rational soul. And when it has got that far, how much longer it takes before it walks, talks, has good sense. And when Paul speaks of those reborn in the Spirit, he says that the inner man is renewed in them from day to day.[1206] And what Scripture sometimes speaks of as rebirth[1207] and a new creature,[1208] in other places it calls reformation, renewal, restoration, reparation, and sometimes even revival.[1209] But it would be absurd to insist on total correspondence of all aspects in these metaphors. Reformation applies not to what does not exist but to what has been corrupted. Free will, therefore, existed because it is restored by grace. But whenever something is repaired which has a natural ability to act, it is no wonder if it is somewhat active, together with the action of grace, in the process of rebirth and preservation. But as for James' statement, 'Of his own will he begot us by the word of his power,'[1210] it does not totally exclude the power of free will, but rather it precludes any obligation on God's part.[1211] The Jews thought that this salvation was due to

* * * * *

[1205] Gal 4:19

[1206] 2 Cor 4:16

[1207] For example, John 3:3–5

[1208] 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15

[1209] Except for *reparationem* 'reparation,' which does not occur in Scripture either as a noun or as a verb, the other terms here listed appear, usually as verbs. See, for example, Rom 12:2; Tit 3:5; Eph 1:10; Luke 15:24, 32.

[1210] James 1:18; Erasmus follows Luther's quotation *verbo virtutis suae* 'the word of his power' rather than the Vulgate reading *verbo veritatis* 'the word of truth.' I have found no variant reading *virtutis*, and in his German Bible Luther translated *Wahrheit*, not *Kraft*.

[1211] That is, God does not owe us the grace of rebirth

LB X 1478C

their merits; James attributes it to the goodness of God, who called sinners and backsliders to justification by the grace of the gospel.

But in the end what are the actions in which we cooperate with God's grace? Works of charity. That is what I think Luther means when he says, 'In this way he preaches through us and through us he takes pity on the poor.'[1212] For the first time now he grants that Karlstadt is wrong when he teaches that the human will is purely passive in good works.[1213] In fact if grace is lost through human arrogance or neglect, certainly it is preserved by the opposite conduct. But in that conduct, as I have shown, free will does something. That is why Paul exhorts the Corinthians not to have received the grace of God in vain and boasts that God's grace was not given to him in vain.[1214] For to receive in vain is to fail to live up to grace, either by turning away from it when it is offered or by driving it away by misusing it. I will not delay here over Luther's stupid refrain, 'Hortatory language does not state facts.' And so it is false that mankind does nothing more in its preservation than in its creation.[1215] Moreover, it is ridiculous for Luther to imagine that God recreates a person through the Spirit as a workman builds himself a house or a workshop in which to exercise his craft, since God prepares a person precisely so that he can work not merely in him, but rather through him, just as a prince takes great pains to have a young man of great promise educated in the theory and practice of politics so that the prince can make use of him in administering the body politic. Finally, what is it in a person that cooperates with operating grace? Isn't it the human will? But this is what we call free will. For a will is not a will if it is not free; and if it is sometimes hampered, it is still free by nature. But Luther teaches that free will is a name with no reality. It makes itself available to grace, it cooperates with grace, it withdraws from grace. But this is what my opponent denies. Then he ought to have proved his denial instead of merely asserting it. Up to this point we have heard nothing but most strenuous assertions.

And so he thinks the following inference is utterly insane: 'Cooperating grace helps a person who is trying; therefore the human will does something.'[1216] This inference is denied by Karlstadt, since no one is said to 'help' an axe or a saw that he is using. And just as he considers this conclusion totally absurd, so too he thinks that all the similes *Discussion* brings

* * * * *

[1212] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:15–16 / LW 33 243

[1213] See n1177 above.

[1214] 1 Cor 15:2, 10

[1215] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:1–12 / LW 33 242–3

[1216] Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 30–2 and n109, 48 and n216.

LB X 1478E

up to clarify it are equally absurd. And this violent debater hurls the argumentative weapons back at poor *Discussion*, making the following inference: 'Grace helps a person towards a good work; therefore that person performs no good work.' He will not allow that the same work be attributed to both God and man, but rather he insists it be assigned either totally to God or totally to man, even though he himself grants that man cooperates with grace in doing a good work.[1217] If in Latin *adiuvare* means 'to assist someone who is really trying but whose powers are not sufficient,' then whenever divine help is mentioned in Holy Scripture we can infer that a person also does something by his own powers, unless perhaps Luther will give us a new definition of 'help.' Earlier he said that man is to grace as the clay is to a potter. I ask you, has anyone ever heard tell that the potter helps the clay? And Luther grants that a person does cooperate with grace. Does the clay cooperate with the potter? If the same work is totally shared by the operator and the cooperator, what sort of inference is it, pray tell, to say that 'wherever there is the help of grace, there is no free will'? He also grants this: 'All of a man's works can be good if they are performed with the help of God's grace' and also 'There is nothing a person cannot do with the help of God's grace.'[1218] But then what has happened to the dogma that a justified man sins in every work, however good, and that all of a man's works are evil, even if he is justified by faith?[1219] If by means of free will a person cooperates with the grace that assists him, then certainly free will is something and does something; and so Luther's dogma that free will has no existence in the real world collapses. And at the same time he forgets that this 'insane argument' is expounded by St Augustine, who says in chapter 4 of his book *Grace and Free Will* addressed to Valentinus: 'Therefore even the victory by which sin is conquered is nothing but a gift of God, who helps free will in this struggle.' So shortly afterwards he concludes: 'Therefore this,' namely free will, 'is aided by grace so that the will may not be commanded without good reason.'[1220] Likewise in *Reproof and Grace*, chapter 2: 'They are acted upon in order that they may act, not so that they themselves should do nothing; and for this reason they are shown how they should act, etc.'[1221] Augustine writes much in this vein in the very books in which he

* * * * *

[1217] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:14–28 / LW 33 243–4

[1218] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:33–4 / LW 33 244

[1219] In *Assertio* Luther defended the thirty-first article: 'In omni opere bono iustus peccat' ('In every good work the just man sins'); see WA 7 136–8. He repeated the same point in his defence of article 36 (*Assertio* WA 7 142:25 / CWE 76 301).

[1220] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 4.8–9 PL 44 887

[1221] *De correptione et gratia* 2.4 PL 44 918 attributes very little, almost nothing at all, to free will; but he does attribute to it the doing of a good work, and he calls it free will.

Where is it, then, that *Discussion* is inconsistent? 'She sets out,' he says, 'to write about the power of free will and she writes about the power of God's grace.'[1222] Did I profess that I would write about free will without mentioning grace? How could you do this, since Luther himself cannot do it but rather admits that free will cooperates with grace? I have explained what free will can do on its own before the arrival of grace; the scholastics attribute more to it, and, unless I am mistaken, the bishop of Rochester, among others, has defended it well enough. He showed that free will can do something by its own natural powers.[1223] Because *Discussion* did not undertake to defend that position, it was outrageous of Luther to demand a defence from me; let him attack the scholastics and he will find someone to reply to him! I attributed no more to free will than that it makes itself available to impelling grace, cooperates with operating grace, and can turn away from either of them. I always make an exception of some unusual volition on God's part, since he can sweep a human will in whatever direction he wishes for reasons unknown to us. Augustine concedes the same points, and nevertheless he holds that free will exists and attributes some action to it. Luther concedes the same. But I am fighting against that dogma of his – which so often escapes his notice – namely the condemned position of Wyclif that free will exists in name only with no reality and the idea Luther repeats so often that in any deed, whether good or evil, a person does no more than an axe in the hand of a workman. *Discussion* is never consistent; Luther is consistent, even though he so often changes his doctrine on the same point. In his opening free will has no power except to sin; in the course of the argument there is no free will at all, but rather God works both good and bad in everyone by sheer necessity; and in the same *Assertion* free will has lordship only in lower affairs.[1224] Then again,

* * * * *

[1222] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:35–6 / LW 33 244

[1223] John Fisher does not accept the scholastic doctrine of *meritum de congruo* before preparatory grace, but afterwards he thinks congruous merit may lead to further graces, though justifying grace cannot be merited *de condigno* or in any fashion. Fisher does, however, place some stress on the idea that God will not reject someone who does everything he can (*quod in se est*), and he denies that good works offer the sinner no help whatever in being able to attain grace sooner. See Edward Surtz SJ *The Works and Days of John Fisher* (Cambridge, Mass 1967) 206, 217, 220, 234.

[1224] Luther does not assert free will in lower matters in *Assertio*, but he does so in earlier and later works, eg *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 638:4–9 / LW 33 70, 672:7–11 / LW 33 118–19; see McSorley 255 n191 and n605 above.

in this work free will is reborn, as it were: it cooperates with grace in good works and with the assistance of grace it can do all things.[1225] Such is the consistency of the fellow who claims that *Discussion* always wanders from the issue.

If it is not absurd to say that the potter helps the clay to become a pot, and if a boy moving a ship with help from someone else is doing nothing, let Luther cry out that such ideas should be spoken to stocks and stones, not men, and let him persuade the learned that the following inference is inescapable: 'There is such a thing as grace bringing assistance to the weakness of mankind; therefore free will is a name only with no reality.' But the reason he gives is a fine one: 'Why is grace bestowed on us?' he says. 'Was it so that the pride of free will, strong enough in its own resources, should frisk and frolic in bacchanalian orgies, wearing grace like a superfluous ornament?'[1226] An amazingly clever bit of wit! If a person has nothing good that he did not receive from God, if the power of free will is ineffective without the help of grace, if the very fact that it can do anything is itself the gift of God, why will it rise up against God? But if the elimination of free will checks the arrogance of mankind, why is there such insolence in some who pretend that they attribute nothing to free will? And if free will does not exist, why is it here said to be 'strong enough'? Is grace when it approaches free will a superfluous ornament? With such witticisms Luther reinforces his anger. If he asks why God wished free will to cooperate with grace, *Discussion* has explained the reasons at sufficient length.[1227] Whenever the assistance of grace is proclaimed, the weakness of free will is also proclaimed, I grant it; but what is not sufficient in itself is not necessarily nothing, and what acts, even though it is acted upon, is not idle. Luther always reasons thus: 'It cannot perform the whole work, therefore it is nothing; it does not act except with help, therefore it does not act at all.' And this is, as he says, 'a conclusion which not even the gates of hell will overthrow.'[1228] Oh, what a brave soldier!

[*Luther's diverse charges against free will in his Assertion and The Enslaved Will*]
After he has discussed these points in this way, just as before he was tired out by his jeers and insults so that he skipped over much evidence that *Discussion* brought up, especially from Paul, so too here he skips over much

* * * * *

[1225] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:3–7 / LW 33 242–3 and 754:32–4 / LW 33 244

[1226] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:36–755:10 / LW 33 244

[1227] *A Discussion* CWE 76 80–3

[1228] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 755:17–18 / LW 33 245. Cf Matt 16:18.

evidence of the same sort, hurling a few jibes at *Discussion*'s similes, as if she had made them all up on her own instead of drawing them from most reputable authors and from Holy Scripture. How superciliously he mocked the text I cited from the prophet Zechariah, 'Turn to me and I will turn to you,'[1229] although Augustine confesses that free will is established by such texts, so much so that there is a danger that this text might be taken to support Pelagius.[1230] How he assails and scoffs at imperative verbs![1231] And Augustine gathers them together and from them seriously infers the existence of free will. What fun he has[1232] with subjunctive verbs such as 'if you seek,' 'if you wish.'[1233] But such a great man as Augustine seriously granted that such expressions reveal that the will chooses.[1234] And when *Discussion* brings up the same evidence, even more vigorously, if I am not mistaken, she is absurd, mad, drunk.[1235] And yet Luther was not ignorant of where *Discussion* had got them. At last he tries to say a word[1236] in my favour, however much that is against the grain for him. He believes that I had good intentions in recommending that just a little bit be left to free will so that apparently contradictory passages in Scripture might be brought into harmony.[1237] If my intentions were good, what has become of that atheistic, Lucianic mocker of Holy Scripture whom he has so often berated throughout this whole work?

Here he demands that I show where he has propounded contradictory doctrines about free will.[1238] I will not drive him through the rounds of various works of his; this book, *The Enslaved Will*, and his *Assertion* illustrate what I am saying. He opens his *Assertion* as follows: 'After sin free will

* * * * *

[1229] Zech 1:4, cited in *A Discussion* CWE 76 35; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 680:20–682:25 / LW 33 132–5

[1230] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 5.10 PL 44 887

[1231] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 676:4–680:22 / LW 33 125–32

[1232] Latin *deliciatus est. Deliciari* in the sense 'enjoy,' 'take pleasure' is not found in classical Latin, but it does occur in dictionaries of medieval Latin. See, for example, *Mediae Latinitatis lexicon minus*, ed J.F. Niermeyer (Leiden 1976); *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* ed R.F. Latham and D.R. Howlett (London 1975–); and *Lexicon Latinitatis Nederlandicae medii aevi* ed Johann Fuchs et al (Leiden 1977–).

[1233] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 672:20–674:36 / LW 33 119–23

[1234] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 2.4 PL 44 883–4; see also *De correptione et gratia* 12.33 PL 44 936.

[1235] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:28–32 / LW 33 244. Cf *A Discussion* CWE 76 34–5.

[1236] See n193 above.

[1237] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 755:27–9 / LW 33 245

[1238] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 756:1–5 / LW 33 246

exists in name only and when it does what in it lies[1239] it sins mortally.'[1240] Here he attributes to free will the power to sin. In the course of the argument he writes: 'How can it prepare itself for the good when it does not even have the power to make its own paths evil?'[1241] It is even clearer a little bit further on: 'Hence it is also necessary to revoke this article. For I misspoke when I said that free will before grace exists in name only; rather I should have simply said "free will is a fiction among real things, a name with no reality." For no one has it within his control to intend anything, good or evil, but rather all things occur by absolute necessity.'[1242] On the other hand, in the same *Assertion* he brings free will back to life when he says, 'From what has been said above, it is abundantly clear to us that even the just struggle mightily against their flesh in order to do good and that their free will resists them.'[1243] See, he has revived free will for you as able to do evil, though he had denied that before. These contradictions occur in the *Assertion* alone. Now in *The Enslaved Will* he often asserts that free will does not exist but that all things, both good and bad, happen by absolute necessity, basing his argument mostly on the fact that God's foreknowledge cannot be deceived. And yet he grants that there is free will in lower affairs, as if there were anything at all which can escape God's foreknowledge.[1244] Sometimes he teaches that free will can do no more than an axe in the hand of a workman or clay in the hands of a potter;[1245] on the other hand, he confesses here that free will can do all things with the assistance of grace.[1246] In another place he teaches that no work of a human being, however justified he may be, is good;[1247] here he grants that all the works of mankind can be good with the assistance of grace.[1248] In another place he teaches that all created things are contingent if they are referred to God;[1249] on the other hand, this same fellow teaches that all things happen necessarily because they are

* * * * *

[1239] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 32 n119 for the *facere quod in se est* doctrine.

[1240] *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 142:23–4 / CWE 76 301

[1241] *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 144:33–4 / CWE 76 305

[1242] *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 146:4–8 / CWE 76 306

[1243] *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 147:14–16 / CWE 76 308

[1244] See n1224 above.

[1245] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 719:36–720:1 / LW 33 191 and WA 18 709:16–36 / LW 33 176

[1246] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:33–4 / LW 33 244

[1247] *Assertio* article 31 WA 7 136–8

[1248] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 754:32–4 / LW 33 244

[1249] Erasmus seems to refer to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 616:7–12 / LW 33 38.

the works of God.[1250] He attributes to the same source the contingency and the necessity of all things. For in his *Assertion* he says: 'For when we look at things here below they seem to be fortuitous and subject to choice but when we look upward all things are necessary.'[1251] But if all things, from the least to the greatest, depend on the will of God, what room is there for this free will which he attributes to mankind in lower affairs? And in this passage I hear myself addressed as 'my dear Erasmus.'[1252] I would not lift a finger[1253] to determine whether these words are intended to flatter or to mock. For I am not of such a delicate temperament that I cannot bear his snarls of disdain, since I share them with the most reputable Doctors of the church and the monarchs of the whole world. Nor is my character so childish that, after I have been derided throughout the book with insults such as no buffoon ever hurled at another buffoon, I would be soothed by a brief phrase.[1254] We are not dealing with a private issue; if we were, nothing could be easier than to fire back mockery and smart-aleck quips. In a public case concerning the faith, private feelings must be put aside, all the more so in my case to keep from seeming to take vengeance for my own pain instead of defending the cause of the church. Then let Luther call me his when he acts in such a way that the Catholic church can call him hers!

[*Luther and St Paul: a contrast*]

But it is worthwhile to see how much he flatters himself. He decided to acknowledge a fault, but he acknowledges it in such a way as to turn it into the highest glory – so incapable he always is of being dissatisfied with himself. 'But as to my having behaved with some vehemence,' he says, 'I acknowledge the fault.' A fellow who has revelled in hurling outrageous insults at someone who never injured him hardly manages to acknowledge that he behaved with a bit too much vehemence! Even this he finds to be too modest, and hence he quickly qualifies it: 'if it be a fault,' he says. 'Rather I am wonderfully delighted that such testimony about me is given to the world in the cause of God. And would that God himself would confirm such testimony on the Last Day. For then who could be happier than

* * * * *

[1250] A point Luther frequently asserts; for example, *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 722:12–13 / LW 33 195

[1251] *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 146:30–1 / CWE 76 307

[1252] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 756:1 / LW 33 245

[1253] *Adagia* I iii 21

[1254] See n193 above.

Luther, who is commended by such ample testimony in his own age because he was neither lazy nor deceitful in defending the cause of truth but did so with sufficient or even excessive vehemence. For then I would happily not have been caught by that verse of Jeremiah: "Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord negligently."'[1255] That is what he said. This is his confession of a fault – could anything be more boastful? Everyone knows what reputation he has in the world. If I were persuaded that he is defending the cause of God, there is no monarch in the world powerful enough to force me to write so much as a word[1256] against him; I would sooner be burned to death. And it is possible that I am not judging his teachings with sufficient subtlety, either because of a lack of learning or slowness of wit. But common sense makes it perfectly clear to me that it is not possible for someone to be handling God's cause with a pure heart if he incites such uprisings in the world, mocking and delighting in jeers and smart-aleck quips so much that he can never get enough of them. And an arrogance so enormous that I have never seen its like in anyone cannot be without folly, and such scurrilous impudence is not consistent with an apostolic spirit. Indeed, to exasperate princes with impertinent quips and vex learned men with the unseemly word 'defiance'[1257] – that is indeed treating God's cause negligently. Such diligence as this was the height of negligence.

If he really wanted to be diligent in the work of God, he ought to have imitated Paul: though he was entirely free, he made himself the slave of everyone; he became all things to all men; he pleased everyone in every way; he did not seek what belongs to him but what belongs to Jesus Christ; he conformed not to what was permitted but to what was expedient; he commanded Christians to abstain from even the appearance of evil; he exhorted them to make the modesty of Christians known to all people; though he knew that an idol is nothing and that meat offered to idols is of no importance, still he thought it better to eat no meat than to be a stumbling-block to the gospel.[1258] He also cut off his hair at Cenchreae because he had made a vow; he went along with customary ceremonies; he circumcised Timothy; he sent Onesimus back to his master; he forbade that a wife should leave her husband or that a Christian slave should leave his pagan master; he commands that tribute, taxes, and honour be paid to pagan magistrates, and whatever else was thought to be owed them; he commands

* * * * *

[1255] Jer 48:10; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 756:9–15 / LW 33 246

[1256] See n193 above.

[1257] See n7 above.

[1258] 1 Cor 9:19–22, 10:33; Phil 2:21; 1 Cor 6:12; 1 Thess 5:22; Phil 4:5; 1 Cor 8:4–13 kindness to all persons; he commands that a bishop be a good teacher, not a quarrelsome brawler, and he wants him to be beyond reproach so that he will have a good reputation even among outsiders; instead of a wife he has a sister, though he could have had a wife and taken her around with him; he worked with his hands, though he could have lived off the gospel; he thought it wrong to tell people what he learned when he was snatched up into the third heaven; he spoke secret wisdom among the perfect; among the rest he knew nothing except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.[1259] In brief, before all audiences he tempered his gospel message to the capacity of those listening to him, and in the last analysis there was nothing he would not do to spread the gospel.[1260]

This was apostolic diligence in the work of the Lord. If Luther had wished to emulate it after he had undertaken this arduous task, he should first of all have seen to it that his mind was free of human emotion and that he never turned his eyes away from Christ. Then he should have taken care that not even any appearance of evil might be a stumbling-block to the weak or might alienate anyone from a commitment to piety. At the same time it was necessary to refrain even from what is allowable, and the truth was to be dispensed according to the character of the times and the mental ability of the audience, so as to gradually eliminate what had slowly crept into the behaviour of mankind, just as Mosaic law was superseded; in the meantime what seemed harsh at first had to be verbally toned down. But above all he should have taken care not to accept into the fellowship of this undertaking any person whose behaviour would invite anyone to blaspheme against the gospel. If because of Luther's teaching a husband had found his wife to be more sober, chaste, and obedient, if a master had found his servant to be more faultless, faithful, responsive to commands, if a dealer had found a workman, clothier, or goldsmith less thievish, if a contractor had found his employee more reliable in doing a day's work, if a buyer had found a tradesman more truthful and less deceitful, if a creditor had found his debtor or a depositor his trustee more trustworthy, if a friend had found his friend to be more blameless in all respects, if magistrates had found citizens more obedient to the laws, if a teacher had found his pupil more responsive, it would have been a strong argument for unskilled people like me that this teaching had its origin in the Spirit

* * * * *

[1259] Acts 18:18, 21:26, 16:3; Philem 10–12; 1 Cor 7:12–14; Eph 6:5–8; Col 3:22; 1 Tim 6:1; Tit 2:9; Rom 13:7; 1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 2:24; Tit 1:6; 1 Tim 3:7; 1 Cor 9:5, 14–18; 2 Cor 11:7, 12:4; 1 Cor 2:6, 2:2

[1260] Cf 2 Thess 3:1.

of God. Peter said to Simon, 'You have no share in this speech.'[1261] Luther's gospel is of a sort that accepts such persons as we know are too numerous; it acknowledges the bankrupt, the type who spends everything on whores, dice, gluttonous banquets, idleness, and extravagance, who permits himself to do anything whatever as long as he can label himself a knight. He thinks that title gives him the right to cheat a creditor, and if a creditor wants his loan back, to consider him an enemy, and if he is pressed by lack of funds, to declare war on one person or another from whom he hopes to get booty, using the name of war as a pretext for public robbery.[1262] A prince has no right to declare war without deliberating about it. And a fellow who doesn't have so much as a square foot of ground to stand on[1263] declares war on whomever he pleases![1264] The new gospel has a place for the kind of people for whom there would be no place in a well-governed city among the pagans. 'This is enough: he approves of my dogmas. What difference does it make what he does as long as he has faith?' I grant that the gospel at one time received such persons, but only when they were repentant and transformed. Nowadays some are so far from being corrected by the gospel that they seem rather to be the worse for it. It does not make them stop sinning but makes them sin with more impunity.

If some morals needed to be corrected or some ceremonies changed, that should have been done by the higher authorities or at least with a consensus of the majority, and then it should have been done gradually and nothing should have been eliminated unless something better was found to take its place. Nowadays some are tackling the problem as if they could suddenly and immediately create a new world. Nothing suits them: regulations, clerical ranks, oil, tonsure, the mass, chant, churches, images, vestments, universities, ceremonies, studies, writings. But what fine replacements have we seen? In human affairs nothing has ever been so well done, nor will anything be done so well in this world, that it does not leave many things that ought to be corrected. To some of these it is best to close our eyes; some should be permitted because of the feelings of simple people.

[1261] Acts 8:21. The Latin is *in sermone hoc* 'in this speech,' but in his *Novum Testamentum* Erasmus translates *in ratione hac* 'in this matter.'

[1262] Cf Erasmus' comments on war in the colloquies 'The Knight without a Horse' CWE 40 880–90 and 'Military Affairs' CWE 39 54.

[1263] *Adagia* I v 7

[1264] Erasmus is thinking of the landless lower nobility of Germany (such as Ulrich von Hutten) who engaged in mercenary bloodshed and pillaging. See n1262 above.

If they are not to be borne with, they should either be tolerated, if the attempted cure is more dangerous than the disease itself, or they should be corrected gradually and skilfully, so that they seem not to be thrown out but rather to be squeezed out by the access of something better. If Luther had employed such moderate means, he would have enjoyed the favour of both the princes and the bishops and all the best persons from among the monks and theologians, who are now most hostile to him. I say these things imagining that the case is entirely as Luther claims it is. For he professed that he would reduce to their original purity corrupt morals in the church and some dogmas which contributed more to the convenience of men than to the glory of Christ. For a long while now all the best people have aspired to carry out this undertaking, but because they saw that, unless God inspired the minds of the princes, it could not be attempted without a severe shock to public tranquillity, they wished rather than hoped for it. Indeed Luther tackled it to the applause of the whole world, but he conducted himself in such a way that sedition, which he ought especially to have avoided, was what he seemed to aim at. At this time I do not wish to recall what most of his disciples are like; for him it is sufficient that they approve of his dogmas, whatever their character may be.[1265] Paul did not want us even to eat a meal with a brother who has a name for greed or whoring or cursing.[1266] Certainly many of these people are so useless in maintaining public tranquillity that even the Turk is said to execrate the name of Luther out of hatred for sedition, even though he might tolerate Christians who differ from him in doctrine.[1267] Why should I recount here how much dissension there is among the evangelicals[1268] – for that is what they call themselves – how fierce their hatred is, how bitter their strife, or rather how inconsistent they are, since Luther himself has modified his decrees so often and new paradoxes sprout up from time to time. After the Anabaptist prophets there is said to have sprung up in Bohemia a new sect; compared with their opinions, those of the Anabaptists could seem pious.[1269] Nor is

* * * * *

[1265] Erasmus may have in mind such supporters of Luther as Ulrich von Hutten, of whose moral character he had a low opinion.

[1266] 1 Cor 5:11

[1267] In other words, the Turkish prince or monarchy might be more offended by such rabble-rousing as Luther's than by any doctrinal differences from Christianity

[1268] See *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 99 n17.

[1269] Erasmus would include here among the 'evangelicals' Luther's opponents Bucer and Zwingli, who denied the physical presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Hus and his followers in Bohemia insisted on the there ever any end to it, always going from bad to worse, to reverse the Greek proverb.[1270]

To this add how irksome, discourteous, arrogant, and bitter he is when he teaches. If what Augustine wrote about free will is true, there is very little it can do. But what Augustine said the church reads with profit; Luther makes it hateful with his harsh language and hyperboles: 'a name with no reality,' 'the absolute necessity of all things,' 'all the Doctors of the church were blind';[1271] and as if that was not hateful enough, he adds and inculcates the condemned names Wyclif and Hus,[1272] although Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Hilary avoided mentioning Origen, Didymus, and Apollinaris[1273] because their names were not without some disrepute. At the same time I pass over the jeers, snarls, and outrageously scurrilous quips, directed even at the monarchs of the world. Let us imagine that it is pious to assist the weakness of people who cannot hold up either in the priesthood or in the monastic life, especially if some of them, while they were still inexperienced adolescents, were thrust into that way of life by the improbity either of their parents or tutors or by some sort of force or some accident, so that they

* * * * *

reception of both the bread and the wine, but did not deny the real presence. The sect worse than the original Anabaptists (who arose in Switzerland after 1525) was probably the splinter Anabaptist sect led by Hans Hut in Nikolsburg, Moravia (adjoining Bohemia). Hut's faction supported pacifism and the abolition of magistrates among Christians. His opinions and his debate with the more conservative Anabaptist Balthasar Hubmaier in Nikolsburg in 1527 were widely known. See George Huntston Williams *The Radical Reformation* Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies 15, 3rd ed (Kirksville, MO 1992) 339–48. Erasmus may also be referring to the Sabbatarians, whom he later mentioned in similar terms in *De sarcienda ecclesiae concordia* LB V 505D–506A; see also *Purgatio* ed C. Augustijn ASD IX-1 478:3–6 and note.

[1270] *Δευτέρων ἀμεινόνων* 'the second state being better' (*Adagia* I iii 38)

[1271] *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 146:3–8, 148:32–5 / CWE 76 306–7, 309

[1272] Luther mentions and approves of Hus only at *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 657:21–6 / LW 33 96. He praises Wyclif often: *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 146:7–8 / CWE 76 306; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 640:8 / LW 33 72, 640:25 / LW 33 117, 699:15 / LW 33 160, 746:12 / LW 33 231. On Wyclif and Hus see *A Discussion* CWE 76 12 n35 and *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 133 n199.

[1273] Origen (c 185–254), the first systematic theologian and biblical exegete, was admired but also attacked for teachings later determined to be heterodox. Didymus the Blind (c 313–98), an influential theologian and head of the famous catechetical school of Alexandria, wrote works that were condemned after his death for including doctrines of Origen. Apollinaris (c 310–90), bishop of Laodicea, was the founder of the heresy named after him, which denied that Christ had a rational human soul.

were forced into it, not led to choose it of their own accord.[1274] First of all, someone who was preparing to discuss this problem should have refrained from exercising the privilege which he thinks others should have. And then he should handle the matter with great circumspection, so that in the process of assisting some few who are worthy of help he does not overthrow and ruin many men and women who are standing fast; for people have a strong inclination towards the things of the flesh. If Luther had taught nothing but what is pious and had done so steadfastly and seriously, with apostolic gentleness, never giving any indication in his writings of a mind corrupted by the desires of the flesh, and if he had instructed his disciples to commend their teaching to everyone by their conduct, then he could have preached to us about his diligence in the work of the Lord. 'But he is rather vehement by temperament.'[1275] If he wanted to be vehement he had Paul's thunder and lightning. Luther is wanton[1276] and sportive, often a buffoon, always a braggart. What is the result of this impudence? That even if he says something true it receives no credence, and a sound opinion is unacceptable because it was presented unsuitably. To say nothing in the meantime about a certain sly craftiness of which his writings smack from time to time.

Finally, what sort of attitude the fellow has we see by its results: everything tends towards bloody uprisings, and at the same time he plays around with witticisms as if he were unconcerned. The shamelessness with which he has raged against *Discussion* has already displeased even his most devoted adherents. And to be sure the modest fellow acknowledges his fault, but it is amazing how he extenuates it. 'But if,' he says, 'I seemed to treat *Discussion* somewhat harshly, you will forgive me.' First he is not sure that he seems harsh, or rather somewhat harsh – as he softens the word – though up to now he has raged against no one more licentiously. But the fellow is stirred up by the gravity of the cause. What cause? 'Because *Discussion* has done violence to the cause of Christ, not by her erudition, which is non-existent, but by her authority.'[1277] I find the pretence of my authority ridiculous, since I don't acknowledge that I have any. Therefore, in order to deprive me of authority, he thought it was necessary for him to play the role of a buffoon. But in fact he would have contributed more both to the cause and to his own authority if he had handled the matter with serious arguments. As it is, if you remove the jeers, insults, and boasts from the work, hardly a quarter of the volume would be left. But in what forum did he want to deprive me of authority by means of his insults? Among his own adherents? I gave that up long ago with no regrets. Among serious and learned men? Among them he has increased the authority of my name, if it has any. If he is troubled by authority, why did he make no reply to the University of Paris, which used its authority to condemn his dogmas publicly?[1278] Why did he remain silent when faced by the bishop of Rochester,[1279] whose authority is enhanced more by the holiness of his life than by either his learning or the dignity of his office? It is only *Discussion*'s authority that he cannot stand. How likely is that on the face of it? But he had to obey Thrasybulus, that most treacherous betrayer of his friends, and Astaeus, a perfect match for that traitor.[1280] Nor was it difficult to spur on a horse running where he wants most of all to go.[1281] But though he attacks others, making a mountain out of a molehill,[1282] with marvellous delicacy he softens his own faults, if he has any or if they are not in fact the highest virtue.

[1274] A subject Erasmus felt strongly about for personal reasons. See the colloquy 'The Whole Duty of Youth' CWE 39 98:15–27 and nn74, 76 and Cornelis Augustijn *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence* trans J.C. Grayson (Toronto 1991) 22.

[1275] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 756:9–10 / LW 33 246. Cf 631 above.

[1276] Latin *deliciatur*; see n1232 above.

[1277] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 756:15–18 / LW 33 246

'Who can temper his style everywhere,' he says, 'so that it never grows heated? You yourself, out of zeal for modesty, are almost blasé in your book, but still you not infrequently hurl fiery and bitter barbs, so that if the reader is not very patient and well disposed, you might well seem to be virulent. But such matters have nothing to do with the case, and we ought to be glad

* * * * *

[1278] The University of Paris condemned 105 Lutheran articles on 15 April 1521 (WA 8 255–312).

[1279] See n485 above.

[1280] Thrasybulus may represent Justus Jonas, who, according to CEBR (II 246) was 'devoted to public life rather than to quiet scholarship'; on Jonas see *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 228 and n719, 255–6 and n874, and 266 n913; see also 641 and n1292 below. 'Astaeus' seems to be transliterated from the Greek ἀστεῖος, the equivalent of the Latin *urbanus* 'a man of affairs,' which probably refers to Urbanus Rhegius; see n447 above.

[1281] Literally, 'to overturn a wagon'; in *Adagia* I vi 13 Erasmus explains that wagons were unloaded by turning them over and that this was often done on a slope, so that the saying came to apply to urging someone to do something he already wants to do.

[1282] Literally, 'makes an elephant out of a fly' (*Adagia* I ix 69); see *A Discussion* CWE 76 6 n8.

LB X 1484D

to pardon one another for them, since we are human and there is nothing alien to humanity in us.'[1283] This is what he says. Though no one ever wrote more rabidly than Luther, nevertheless he wants us to believe that his fierceness is simply an occasional inability to keep his style in hand, something he shares with all writers. In fact the excess arises from his straightforward temperament and his zeal for God's cause, to which he is marvellously devoted. And then, although in *A Discussion* I employed such restraint that some thought that I was in cahoots, not in conflict, with Luther, nevertheless he says that there are some barbs in it that could even make me seem virulent if Luther were not vehemently patient and well disposed, since he takes everything in good part, saying all this to make me thank him for treating *Discussion* in such a calm and friendly fashion. But if the fellow had not been so guileless and well disposed, what an enormous cesspool[1284] of insults he would have spewed out, whereas now, being well disposed and guileless and genuinely friendly, throughout his whole book he attributes to me absolute and universal ignorance, a mind thoroughly stupefied, forgetfulness, thoughtlessness, drowsiness, drunkenness, dullness, madness – but these are venial – an Epicurean, Lucianic, that is, atheistic mind that does not believe in the existence of God, mocks Holy Scripture, and blasphemes against God. And he continually repeats these insults, so often that even he would be sick of them except that his craving for abuse soon regains its strength.

I do not see what could offend him in *Discussion* except that when she deals with miracles she denies that so far any of those is to be found who could heal a lame horse;[1285] and yet even this is not directed specifically at Luther, but at any and all adherents to his conspiracy. Oh what a delicate temperament, which cannot put up with the tiniest joke and thinks it is hardly matched by such huge swarms of abuse and mockery throughout his whole book! 'Let us pardon one another,' he says. What could be sweeter than such self-love?[1286] – just as if someone who had been sprinkled with water should throw the one who did it down in the mud, beat him with clubs, leave him wounded and half dead, and then, when his vengeance has been satiated, should say, 'Let us pardon one another; there is nothing alien to humanity in us.' And here at last he begins to recognize that he is a man, whereas elsewhere he is driven by the Spirit of God, which

* * * * *

[1283] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 756:18–23 / LW 33 246; Terence *Heautontimorumenos* 1.25
[1284] Literally, 'Lernean swamp,' where sewage was dumped (*Adagia* I iii 27)
[1285] *A Discussion* CWE 76 19
[1286] See n1071 above.

he never begs to receive but rather to receive more abundantly, praying for me that I may be illuminated and become a vessel of honour. And if his attitude is so thin-skinned that he cannot put up with a joke about a lame horse, why is he so gentle with others, who treat him otherwise and deck him out with other titles? And if he cannot put up with *Discussion* when, out of a desire for modesty, she becomes banal, how would he have put up with someone who put forth stinging insults like his own? But the brothers persuaded him that Erasmus is a wimp with no gumption, a milquetoast, scared to death of abusive thunderclaps. If I were not held back by a regard for public tranquillity, he would find out what a timid wimp he has challenged! He promises himself wonderful fame among posterity. But I predict instead that no name under the sun will be more accursed than Luther's, both among papists and antipapists. He has stirred up the worldly princes of the world, he has so thoroughly inflamed the cause of reforming the discipline of the church – which was favoured by all the best persons – as to strengthen its opponents and to render the evils incurable, since, short of help from a deus ex machina, they can never be ameliorated without shedding enormous amounts of Christian blood.[1287] The first-fruits we have seen among the peasants.[1288] And in such a state of affairs he makes fun of whomever he chooses with his smart-aleck quips. There was something else which made him angry at *Discussion*. What? That I censured the opinion of Philip without mentioning his name.[1289] Such intolerable virulence!

Now in a pamphlet written in German he accuses me of ingratitude because I censured Wilheyl.[1290] Does someone with this name really exist? If there neither is nor ever has been such a person, then I never named anyone. And still, whoever he was, I owe him nothing, but he owes a good deal to me. He was a friend, but the friendship of this one person brought me more trouble than the enmity of many persons. This is enough about a dead man. I do not think that Jonas is so dishonest that he would boast of his services to me. Formerly he seemed to me to be a man of sound and

* * * * *

[1287] A lamentably accurate prophecy of more than a century of bloody religious warfare

[1288] Erasmus refers to the Peasants' War of 1525, which (with Luther's encouragement) the princes put down with bloody ruthlessness.

[1289] See 583 and nn1011–12 above.

[1290] In *Martin Luthers Antwort* (1527) Luther says that Wilhelm Nesen praised Erasmus highly to Luther and begged Luther to treat Erasmus kindly in replying to *De libero arbitrio*; but Luther goes on to say that Erasmus was ungrateful to Nesen because he spoke badly of him in *Hyperaspistes 1* (WA 23 30:12–20). See *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 100 nn23–4.

calm character, before he was inspired by the spirit of Luther. What he is like now I do not know.[1291] He has no other reason to complain about me except that, when he was arguing against Fabri, I wrote him that he was intermingling too many insults, like Luther himself.[1292] Even if I had not said this, the published book would have made it obvious. This was an admonition, not an attack. But what grounds does Luther have for complaint? Certainly it must be a weighty and serious matter to have exasperated such a gentle temperament. When *Discussion* appeared, she was so far from stinging insults that Luther himself grants that, out of a desire to be modest, she is banal. And yet, breathing dire threats, he got out his bloody pen and would have treated Erasmus in his usual fashion if two persons he regarded most highly had not put out the fire, Wilheyl and Doctor Jonas, both of whom pleaded mightily that he reply moderately and calmly, justifying their plea with my white hair, my old age, honourable and worthy of veneration, praising me to the skies as nothing short of angelic. He was compelled not only to hear their praise, he says, but also to believe it, though the apology in which I replied to Lefèvre d'Etaples told another story.[1293] For he tries to reopen that wound, which has long since been healed, though that controversy between Lefèvre and me took place with no damage to our friendship.[1294] But someone brought him the happy but erroneous news that Lefèvre is on his side. Hence those tears.[1295] See the man's humanity: he had such a high opinion of his two bosom friends Wilheyl and Jonas that he responded to *Discussion*, who did no more than discuss the issue, with the great modesty and gentleness that we see in this book to which I am now responding. It would not be polite for me to quote the letters he wrote me privately right after the book was published; in them his point was that I

* * * * *

[1291] See 638 and n1280 above.

[1292] Erasmus chided Jonas for the bitter tone of his reply to Fabri's attack against Luther: *Adversus Ioannem Fabrum ... scortationis patronum pro coniugio sacerdotali, Iusti Ionae defensio* (*Justus Jonas' Defence against Johannes Fabri, Supporter of Whoredom instead of the Marriage of the Clergy*), which appeared in 1523. If Erasmus means here that he wrote a reproachful letter to Jonas, the letter has apparently not survived.

[1293] *Martin Luthers Antwort* WA 23 30:12–18

[1294] Erasmus replied to Lefèvre d'Etaples in *Apologia ad excellentem virum Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem* (Louvain: Martens, 1517), which has been translated in CWE 83. On the quarrel see also Eugene F. Rice Jr's introduction to *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples* (New York 1971) xi–xxv and Rummel, *Catholic Critics* I 49–59.

[1295] Terence *Andria* 1.1.99

should thank him for treating me in such a guileless and friendly fashion, for he would have written quite differently if he had been dealing with an enemy.[1296] Was there ever a temperament so in love with itself?

He mixes in such material once more when he is giving the reason why he wrote to the king of England,[1297] extenuating his offence.[1298] This he ascribes to Christian, king of Denmark; the other composition,[1299] to Wilheyl and Jonas. A splendid parallel! Let us grant that the king of Denmark instigated him to write a letter to placate the feelings of a king whose name he had raged against in such a boorish fashion. Did he also persuade him to give similar treatment to someone who he knew was very dear to the king?[1300] Here we are forced to find wanting in Luther not only Christian modesty but even ordinary prudence. And Luther scattered these claims throughout the world in the German language,[1301] although I am less disturbed by his attacks than by his invidious praises. What reason could he have, in the opening of this same book, to prefer my learning to that of the king of England together with all his ignorant dabblers? For that is the

* * * * *

[1296] These letters of Luthers are not extant, but in his reply to one of them (Ep 1688, from Basel, 11 April 1526) Erasmus refused to be placated.

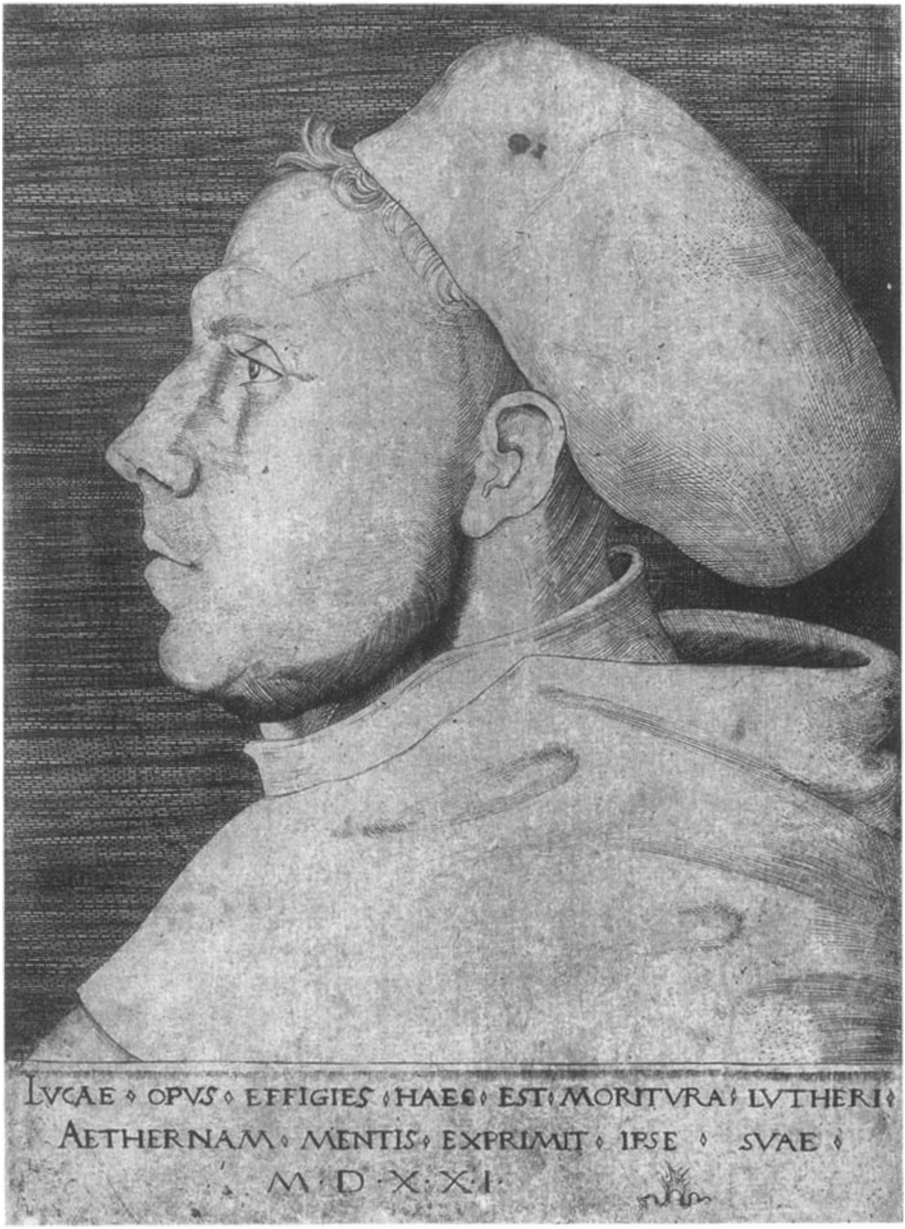
[1297] Henry VIII's *Assertio septem sacramentorum* (1521), a reply to Luther's *De captivitate Babylonica* (1520), was violently attacked by Luther in *Contra Henricum regem Angliae* (1522). Thomas More responded to Luther with equal vehemence in *Responsio ad Lutherum* (1523). In 1525 Christian II (1481–1549), king of Denmark (1513–1523), who had come to Wittenberg in 1523 to hear Luther preach (WA *Briefwechsel* 3 187–8), wrote to Spalatinus that Luther should be urged to apologize to Henry for *Contra Henricum*. In 1527 Luther published a letter to Henry, *Martin Luthers Antwort* (WA 23 17–37), but it was far from conciliatory. Erasmus may have learned that Christian prompted Luther's letter to Henry and that Jonas and Nesen urged him to write *De servo arbitrio* from lost letters Luther wrote to Erasmus after the publication of *De servo arbitrio* (see n1296 above). In Ep 1729 (30 July 1526) Erasmus wrote that he suspected Nesen encouraged Luther to write against Henry VIII and Cochlaeus.

[1298] *Martin Luthers Antwort* WA 23 32:15–33:21

[1299] According to Luther, Christian encouraged him to write the letter to Henry VIII; Jonas and Nesen, to write *De servo arbitrio* (*Martin Luthers Antwort* WA 23 31:1–6, 30:12–13).

[1300] That is, did Christian persuade Luther to speak boorishly of Erasmus (as Luther did in *De servo arbitrio*) because he knew Erasmus was dear to Henry? – a preposterous idea. In his letter to Henry VIII Luther calls Erasmus 'one of the king's best friends' (*Martin Luthers Antwort* WA 23 26:13).

[1301] Ironical, since only Latin, not German, could command a worldwide audience, though it is true that Erasmus deplored Luther's German writings for stirring up sedition (as well as slandering him)


LVCAE · OPVS · EFFIGIES · HAEC · EST · MORITVRA · LVTHERI ·
AETHERNAM · MENTIS · EXPRIMIT · IPSE · SVAE ·
M·D·X·X·I·

Luther
Copperplate engraving by Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1521
Hamburger Kunsthalle

way he talks.[1302] What grounds were there here, I say, for him to compare me to the king and the learned men of England rather than to Willibald or Budé or Leoniceno[1303] or someone else from a whole troop of writers? The king had written in Latin, and in what he wrote there was not a single syllable that makes any mention of me, nor was there anything in it that pertains to me. A reply to him should have been written in Latin; and here, ignoring the king, he writes in Saxon and suddenly thrusts in Erasmus' name, mixing an apple with the oranges,[1304] as they say, quite apropos of nothing.[1305] For I think the fellow is not so stupid as to imagine that I am delighted with such praises. He feigned admiration to create ill will for me among the British, among whom I have the most steadfast and genuine friends. Published books make it clear how learned the king is. As for the dabblers, I do not think there is any country – and I sincerely mean what I say – where there is such an abundance of extraordinarily learned men in all sorts of fields, though few publish their writings. In this number I know of none so ordinary that I could rightly be compared with him in learning. But this is more than enough about this matter. My main reason for touching on it was to let those who think whatever Luther writes is oracular know to what sort of spirit they are entrusting the salvation of their souls.

[ERASMUS' RESPONSE TO LUTHER'S PRESENTATION OF HIS CASE]

[*Is mankind universally sinful and lacking free will?*]

After this he prepares a fresh triumph: *Discussion* lies prostrate, covered with stab-wounds, pierced not only by the weapons of the enemy but also by all the weapons she hurled at the enemy, which have been thrown back

* * * * *

[1302] Luther says that Erasmus has 'more skill and understanding in his little finger than the king of England with all his dabblers' (*Martin Luthers Antwort* WA 26:12–27:1).

[1303] Willibald Pirckheimer (1470–1530), a famous humanist of Nürnberg; Guillaume Budé, the most learned French Grecist of the early sixteenth century; Niccolò Leoniceno of Vicenza (1428–1524), a learned physician admired by Erasmus. Erasmus asks why Luther chose to compare Erasmus with English humanists instead of with scholars in Germany, France, or Italy. Again, Erasmus thinks he did so to make the English scholars offended with Erasmus.

[1304] Literally, 'perfume among the lentils' (*Adagia* I vii 23)

[1305] Literally, 'having nothing to do with Bacchus' (*Adagia* II iv 57) into her vitals. And yet the victor brings up another battleline, but more for the sake of the triumph than of battle. For who would think it worthwhile to fight against a lifeless corpse? But he does not bring up the whole battleline. For there would be no end of it, since every single jot and tittle supports his dogma. You recognize, my dear reader, the hyperbole! He brings up only Paul and the evangelist John, in whom he will demonstrate how well he could distort texts if he had wished to display his power in other parts of Scripture.[1306] But I do not know whether it is for me to reply to these arguments. For *Discussion* had undertaken primarily to oppose two opinions: according to one, free will in itself can do nothing except evil, and in a good work it is not active but merely passive; according to the other, which is Luther's, free will is a meaningless phrase and can do nothing, either for good or evil. I have often declared that I neither approve nor disapprove of the opinion of the scholastics that free will by its own power can merit justifying grace at least *de congruo*, but I am more inclined to approve than to disapprove. I defended the opinion of Augustine, who teaches that free will does exist in mankind but that, because of sin, it is ineffective in obtaining justifying grace without the help of grace.[1307] But he posits will and striving in mankind, though he claims it is ineffective; he posits impelling grace, which does not yet justify, and hence he posits that a person can stand on a middle ground, a place of transition, as it were, where a person can be numbered neither among the wicked nor among the justified but rather lives within the hand of grace, so to speak, which softens up the material it works on.[1308] For he says that to desire grace is a first move made by grace;[1309] still, many desire grace but live in sin. Yet he attributes this much to free will: it can turn away from the grace offered to it; it can make itself available to grace; it can withdraw from the grace it has obtained, either by negligence if it does not recognize grace as a gift meant to earn interest, or by arrogance if it claims for itself what belongs to God.

[1306] Erasmus summarizes and parodies *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 756:24–757:10 / LW 33 246–7. This section follows Luther's arguments closely, not adhering to the order of *A Discussion* but referring back to it occasionally.

[1307] Erasmus had explained the four opinions he gives here, (those of Karlstadt, Luther, the scholastics of the *via moderna*, and Augustine together with Thomas Aquinas) at greater length in *A Discussion* CWE 76 29–33.

[1308] The comparison seems to come from kneading dough.

[1309] An almost direct quotation from *De correptione et gratia* 1.2 PL 44 917; but in that work Augustine also recommends his *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, and Erasmus' summary here of Augustine's teaching about free will could be drawn from many of his works.

For in good works Augustine does not allow man to claim even the tiniest bit for himself, since even what free will can do is a gift of God. By 'good' I think he means what makes a person blessed, for there are various kinds of goods. But he thinks a person's will is active and acted upon in a good work, that is, it cooperates with grace. Now if Luther is directing his battleline against those who teach that free will can attain to justifying grace merely by its natural powers, he can take it up with others, not with me.

But let us take a look at this battleline of his. 'Paul,' he says, 'writing to the Romans, takes issue with free will in defence of grace.'[1310] I immediately showed that what he assumes is false.[1311] For Paul is doing something else there: clearly he wants to check the arrogance of the philosophers, who scorned the grace of God as if they were perfect. But if Luther, who has so often said that free will doesn't exist and that everything happens by absolute necessity, is trying here to make the point that free will is not adequate for salvation without grace, I certainly agree with him. For grace is not incompatible with free will: it helps a weak will and changes it from more or less free to even freer. But come now, what does Paul really say? 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all wickedness and the unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness.'[1312] Luther claims that the language in this passage is general, or rather, universal; first, that it pertains to all mankind, and then that we should accept as fact that whatever either the gentiles or the Jews did without faith in Christ was wicked and damnable, though what follows in Paul makes it clear that this passage applies to the gentiles: 'What may be known about God was revealed among them. For his invisible qualities, from the creation of the world, etc.'[1313] But this point is not very important. In fact, I showed before that the crimes to which Paul is referring do not apply to all the gentiles, but that the human race in general is being accused, not individual persons,[1314] and that most people are such, so that a few exceptions do not preclude a general statement – something that happens frequently in Scrip-

* * * * *

[1310] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 757:10–12 / LW 33 247

[1311] *A Discussion* CWE 76 41–3

[1312] Rom 1:18. The presence or absence of a comma after 'men' (in either Latin or English) is crucial: with it the following clause is non-restrictive (all men do hold the truth in unrighteousness – Luther's position); without it the clause is restrictive (only those men who hold it in unrighteousness – Erasmus' position). In his *Annotations on Romans* Erasmus says the clause applies only to pagan philosophers (CWE 56 47).

[1313] Rom 1:19–21

[1314] See 488–92 above.

ture, as Origen, Ambrose, and Augustine teach, giving many examples.[1315] Before long I will take up the other point.

At the same time he leaves no stone unturned[1316] in an attempt to make an indefinite proposition into a universal one. 'In this passage,' he states, 'I say that in Paul the meaning is the same if you said "upon all the wickedness of men" or if you said "upon the wickedness of all men." For Paul follows the Hebrew idiom almost always.'[1317] So says Luther, but he is the only one who does. See where he looks for support, from a Hebrew idiom. Sometimes Latin-speakers also say 'man' for 'every man,' as when they say 'man is a rational animal.' But because neither we nor the Jews always do this, Luther's argument is weak. But imagine that Paul had said 'all men.' How does that make the proposition universal, since he limits it by what follows: 'of those who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness'? Though this applies to philosophers who lead shameful lives, it does not apply to all pagans, many of whom simply went wrong because they did not know the truth that was known to the philosophers. He also looks for support in the Greek article. 'The Greek,' he says, 'does not have "of those who hold" but "of men holding," as if this were a modifier, as it were, applying to all men, just as we say "our Father who art in heaven."'[1318] This is what he says. If the Greek article distinguishes our heavenly Father from our earthly father, then here, too, 'of men holding' distinguishes the philosophers who hold the known truth in their unrighteousness from those who do not hold it, according to Origen's interpretation.[1319] Where, then, is the universal statement? It is probable that many Jews were saved

* * * * *

[1315] Cf Origen *Commentarii in Matthaeum* 18 PG 13 1157–82; Ambrose *De spiritu sancto* 3 [13] PL 16 712–17; Augustine *De spiritu et littera* 12.19 PL 44 211–12.

[1316] *Adagia* I vi 30

[1317] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 757:25–7 / LW 33 247–8

[1318] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 757:29–33 / LW 33 248

[1319] *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos* 1.16 PG 14 861. Luther pointed out that the original has the construction article + participle, not the relative clause as in Latin and English. Similarly in the Lord's Prayer, the Greek is *πάτερ . . . ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς*. Luther's example is not helpful since (at least in Luke's version) the participle is understood, although we do have the article: 'Our Father, the [being] in heaven.' More importantly, as Erasmus points out, this is not an example of a universal use of this idiom, since in the Lord's Prayer the idiom is not universal, applying to all fathers, but rather divides one kind of father from other fathers. Hence the example from the Lord's Prayer supports Erasmus' interpretation of the text under discussion. The difficulty which both Luther and Erasmus have here is that there is no equivalent in Latin for the article, so that any attempt at translation is necessarily defective.

LB X 1487F

after Christ's death even though they did not expressly believe that Christ was God and man, born of the Virgin Mary, sitting at the right hand of the Father, because these teachings had not yet been preached. Whatever sort of faith they had was sufficient for the time being. What if among the gentiles there were also some whose faith God approved of? For there were some who believed that God is the supreme mind, eternal, omnipotent, beyond our understanding, greater and better than anything we can imagine, the creator and governor of all things, who rewards piety and takes vengeance on wickedness. It does not matter what they called this mind – the world, nature, Jove or some other name – with the understanding that God's goodness has supplied what is lacking to their natural powers. I want this to be said, however, just for the sake of argument, even though St Ambrose in his book *The Calling of the Gentiles* expresses the opinion more than once that the providence of God has never been lacking to any era, people, or person.[1320] Actually, when it is said that the anger of God is revealed, it is not to show that before the gospel no one knew that God takes vengeance on evildoers, since the Apostle writes about the philosophers, 'who, though they recognized the righteousness of God, etc,'[1321] but rather to show that after grace had been offered to all they would now appear inexcusable for scorning the great gift that was offered to them. But Luther's inference is absurd: 'Anger is revealed; therefore no one knew he deserved vengeance.'[1322] It is revealed by being preached very clearly throughout the world; it is revealed so that any excuse, whether ignorance or despair, is eliminated, whereas previously many did not know they were sinning, and some did not believe that God exists or that the soul survives apart from the body.

Now supposing that these revelations apply to all who did not believe in the gospel, it does not immediately follow that what is most outstanding in mankind is wickedness. For even though we grant that moral virtues are not sufficient to gain evangelical justification without faith, people still were not doing wicked deeds when they honoured their parents, loved their children and wives, supported the poor, sick, and afflicted – all of which many of them did out of no other motive than that they considered such deeds in themselves to be worthy of a good man and because they wanted the same things to be done for them if they fell into similar circumstances.

* * * * *

[1320] Pseudo-Ambrose *De vocatione omnium gentium* 2.25, 2. 29, 2.31 PL 51 710, 715–16

[1321] Rom 1:32

[1322] Erasmus encapsulates Luther's argument at *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 758:14–36 / LW 33 249–50.

You would have found such persons more readily among the uneducated than among the philosophers, if we are to believe their satirists.[1323] Now the highest mental power, by which they knew God and through which they perceived and desired what is honourable, was not wicked simply because many were corrupted by the desires of the flesh and fell into shameful practices. And they did not lack free will simply because they abused it. But let us concede the point Luther is so eager to win, that all, both Jews and gentiles, were wicked before they believed in the gospel – which is quite false – how does that impugn my opinion? Is it true that wherever there is sin, there is no free will, since Augustine does not deprive even the Pharaoh of free will?[1324] But if Luther is trying to show that the power of free will is not sufficient for salvation without the assistance of grace, I quite agree with him, as I said. But before the grace of the gospel had been sufficiently preached, that vague faith in the Annointed One was sufficient for the Jews, though it was not sufficient once the light of the gospel flashed out. Perhaps such persons were also found among the gentiles. And from that arose a stumbling-block to the Jews and the contempt of the gentiles.[1325] Thus the dawning light of the gospel made those who were formerly justified no longer justified if they did not believe in the gospel. And that is what Paul means when he says, 'The anger of God is revealed from heaven upon all wickedness.' And so the anger of God would have been revealed in this way even upon many Jews who are now in heaven, if they had not believed the gospel when it was preached, even though it is probable they did not know many truths revealed by the gospel, such as the divine and human natures joined in one hypostasis,[1326] the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, the Holy Spirit as God proceeding from each of them, the virgin birth, the resurrection, the ascension, the sitting at the right hand of the Father, the body and the blood received in the Eucharist, and the other sacraments of the church. Moreover, just as someone who is justified is not immediately said to lack all vices, so too those who are said to be not justified are not so called because there is nothing good about them but because they are subject to many and great sins. But Luther makes this inference: they lack someone to justify them; therefore the very best they have is

* * * * *

[1323] Philosophers were especially attacked in Aristophanes' *The Clouds* and Lucian's *Auction of the Philosophers* and *The Fisherman*.

[1324] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 23.45 PL 44 911

[1325] Cf 1 Cor 1:23.

[1326] 'Hypostasis' is a technical term in trinitarian theology meaning 'substance' or 'person.' Divinity and humanity are united in one substance in Christ.

wicked. He delights in such hyperboles.[1327] Now he also distorts the phrase 'in their thoughts,' which in Greek is διαλογισμοῖς,[1328] a word that seems to apply to those who are reasoning about something.[1329] For Paul does not condemn them because they reasoned badly about God, whose sempiternal godhead they fully understood, but because they were corrupted by their desires and did not worship the God they knew as they should have. Thus Seneca mocks the worship of the gods, but he still thinks it should be observed, not because it is pious but because it is commanded by the public laws.[1330] Just because reason without grace is overthrown by the passions, it does not follow that there is no propensity for good. And at the same time Luther is inconsistent. Over and over he denied that there is any striving towards virtue, and he says it again here. Nevertheless, seemingly forgetting himself, he says here: 'It is impossible that no one among the Jews and gentiles acted and strove with the full force of his free will.'[1331] And it does not follow that because the striving was imperfect in the absence of grace therefore it was wicked.

Moreover, as for Paul's testimony, 'All have turned aside,'[1332] which Luther distorts so as to apply it to all Jews, I have shown that it cannot refer to individual persons but is spoken generally, because many were such before the gospel, as is clear from their persecution of Christ. Luther makes an exception of those who were in the Spirit.[1333] But there were also such persons among the Jews before the spreading of the gospel and perhaps even among the gentiles, since the law of Moses, which was not given to all, was not binding on all, and the gentiles were not required to have a strict faith in all the articles, such as was required of the Jews, and of Christians even more strictly. For Luther applies this passage in Paul to the whole race of mortals, whereas holy Doctors affirm that it is spoken specifically about the Jews, whom he reproaches with the words of the Law, lest

* * * * *

[1327] Erasmus is responding to the long passage which begins at *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 757:35 / LW 33 248.

[1328] Rom 1:21; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 759:33–4 / LW 33 251

[1329] Luther had glossed the Greek word as *argutis disputationibus* 'subtle disputations,' whereas Erasmus takes it to mean simply 'thoughts.'

[1330] Seneca mocks superficial, external worship of the gods in *Epistulae morales* 95.47–9 and 115.5; *De beneficiis* 1.6.3; and *Quaestiones naturales* 4.6.1–3. He approves of prescribed public prayers in *De clementia* 1.19.7–8.

[1331] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 759:16–17 / LW 33 250

[1332] Rom 3:12, citing Ps 13:3. See 646 above, where Erasmus has shown it to be spoken generally.

[1333] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 760:31–2 / LW 33 252

they should think these accusations pertain to the gentiles. They give two reasons for thinking the words are addressed to the Jews: first, for reasons proper to their own case, Paul directs against the gentiles such charges as he here levels at the Jews, namely in chapter 1; second, because Paul adds, 'But we know that whatever the Law says is said to those who are under the Law.'[1334] 'But,' Luther will say, 'if these charges apply to the Jews, they apply all the more to the gentiles living without the Law, without God.'[1335] Does he therefore want to claim that all these accusations are directed against the whole human race, with no exceptions whatever? Let him tell us, then, what period God had in mind, before the Law or under the Law, before the preaching of the gospel or afterwards? Does he have all periods in mind when he says what is reported by Paul? But before the Law there were Abel, Enoch, Noah, Melchisedek, Job, to whom these words do not apply at all. Under the Law many were praised under the heading of justice, and Scripture testifies that they sought God with all their heart, like David himself in this text: 'With all my heart I sought you; do not hold me back from your commandments.'[1336] But perish the thought that we should apply these words to the whole church of Christ.[1337] Jerome and other reputable exegetes think the prophecy in this psalm[1338] should be referred to the time when the Lord suffered, when all turned away from him, so much so that even the prince of the apostles forswore him.[1339] But in fact the harsh things said here do not apply to these people or to Nicodemus or to the other men and women who were disciples of the Lord. Indeed, this episode tells about the piety of the women who provided the aromatic ointments;[1340] nor did all the Jews hurl blasphemies at Jesus, nor did all agree to the death of an innocent man – to say nothing, for the moment, about

* * * * *

[1334] Rom 1:17 and 3:19; cf Chrysostom *Commentarius in epistulam ad Romanos* 7.2 PG 60 441–2; Augustine *De spiritu et littera* 26.44 PL 44 227–8 and *Contra secundum Iuliani responsionem imperfectum opus* 2.175 PL 45 1217; and Jerome *Commentariorum in epistolam ad Ephesios libri tres* 1.22–3 PL 26 463.

[1335] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 761:14–19 / LW 33 253

[1336] Ps 118:10

[1337] Not the words in the preceding sentence but Paul's condemnations in Rom 1:18 and 3:10–18

[1338] That is, Ps 13:1–3, cited by Paul in Rom 3:10–13. On 'the prophecy in the psalm' see 653 and nn1354–5 below.

[1339] Jerome *Commentarii in Esaiam* 1.1.21 and 16.59.7–8 CCSL 73 20:9–12 and 73A 682:25–8; Augustine *Contra secundam Iuliani responsionem imperfectum opus* 2.175 PL 45 1217

[1340] John 19:39–40; Luke 23:56–24:1

the Jews who lived far away, scattered throughout the world and ignorant of what was going on in Jerusalem.

And so, even if we grant that these charges should be applied to the Jews, they cannot refer to all of them because we read in the same psalm: 'who devour my people like a morsel of bread.'[1341] How is it fitting to call them the people of God if they are the object of such harsh reproaches as could never be levelled even at all the pagans? Add to that the fact that the opening of the psalm shows that they are not spoken against all mankind but only against the wicked. For the psalm begins thus: 'The fool said in his heart, "There is no God."'[1342] And then, in the sight of God, the number is changed and an indication of generality is added: 'All have turned away; all alike have become worthless.'[1343] Christ assailed the tyranny of Satan at the very time when Satan's reign in the world was at its zenith. But if even at that time this prophecy did not apply to all mortals, there was never a time when it could be spoken against everyone, as Luther interprets it. But if we follow the teaching of Ambrose and refer the general expression to one part of the whole race, so that those who lack the Spirit of God are said to turn aside,[1344] Paul's evidence has no value here, since he is trying to show that all mortals have sinned and lack the glory of God, which was revealed through the grace of the gospel.[1345] Now since it is clear that this evidence has been woven together from various parts of Scripture, these verses, 'Their throat is an open sepulchre, they use their tongues for treachery,'[1346] are not spoken by God looking out at the sons of men, but by the prophet against the enemies of piety. And then it is clear from what follows that not everyone was so wicked: 'And let all who hope in thee, Lord, rejoice.'[1347] Then again, what follows, 'The poison of asps is under their tongues,'[1348] is spoken against the same wicked persons, but it is clear from what follows that it does not apply to everyone: 'But nevertheless the just will confess your name.'[1349] The next little piece, 'whose mouth is full

* * * * *

[1341] Ps 13:4

[1342] Ps 13:1

[1343] Ps 13:3

[1344] Pseudo-Ambrose *De vocatione omnium gentium* 1.9 PL 51 661

[1345] In this sentence Erasmus is paraphrasing Luther *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 758:17–20 / LW 33 248.

[1346] Ps 13:3, drawn from Ps 5:11 and quoted in Rom 3:13

[1347] Ps 5:12

[1348] Ps 13:3, drawn from Ps 139:4 and quoted in Rom 3:13

[1349] Ps 139:14

of cursing,' is taken from Psalm 9,[1350] where it is in the singular, and in that place mention is made of the just, whose desire the Lord has heard.[1351] The last verse, 'There is no fear of the Lord before their eyes,' is from the opening of Psalm 35 and is singular in number: 'The fool spoke to himself; there is no fear before his eyes.'[1352] And that this is not spoken about the whole human race is clear from another verse in the same psalm: 'But the sons of men hope for shelter under your wings.'[1353] The three verses in the middle are taken from Isaiah, chapter 59,[1354] where God is reproaching the people for their malice, not because they were born such but because they departed from the Lord out of a corrupt will, and he is not expostulating with anyone but the Jews. But Jerome points out that the verses in the middle of Psalm 13, from 'open sepulchre' to 'there is not fear of God,' are not in the Hebrew but were added by some zealous person from Paul's citation because he thought that what was woven together from other places had been left out of the psalm.[1355] Although in this passage the Apostle weaves together evidence from various places, although twice he changes the number so that what was said against a single person he turns against everyone, still Luther makes a marvellous to-do because *Discussion* said that sometimes the passages quoted by Paul offer him more support than they do in their original context.[1356] In fact, however, this was said in praise of the Apostle, who fights with scriptural weapons so knowledgeably and diligently. But to return to the point, if this whole passage pertains to the whole human race, as Luther claims, what will we do with the many men commended by God's testimony, some of them even sanctified in the womb? Finally, what will we do with John the Baptist, who was a prophet before he was born?[1357] If it applies only to those who were in the flesh and not yet reborn in the Spirit, how is it consistent with what follows, 'that the whole

* * * * *

[1350] Ps 13:3, drawn from Ps (10):7 and quoted in Rom 3:14

[1351] Ps (10):17

[1352] Ps 13:3, drawn from Ps 35:2 and quoted in Rom 3:18; it is the last verse in the passage from Paul under discussion.

[1353] Ps 35:8

[1354] Ps 13:3 (from 'their feet are swift' to 'path of peace'), drawn from Isa 59:7–8 and quoted in Rom 3:15–17

[1355] Jerome *Commentarii in Esaiam* (on 59:7–8) CCSL 73A 682:25–35

[1356] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 761:1–2 / LW 33 253; see *A Discussion* CWE 76 54 and nn728 and 800 above.

[1357] Because he leaped in the womb when Mary greeted his mother Elizabeth (Luke 1:41–4) world may be subject to God'?[1358] For it is clear that here 'world' does not mean only those dedicated to the world but the whole race of mortals from the beginning of the world all the way to the end. Origen even wonders if the passage applies to the angels – so far is he from excluding any human being.[1359] Then again, if it applies to everyone, does that text 'the poison of asps is under their tongues' apply to children, and will those who are too young to talk be said to have a mouth full of cursing? And will those who cannot yet walk have 'feet swift to shed blood'?[1360] But why am I talking about children? Was there ever among the pagans a people so abominable that everything that Luther claims fits mankind, one and all, is applicable to all of them?

You will say: what is this discussion driving at? That either Scripture is lying or that Paul cites it in bad faith? Far from it. But rather I want to parry the weapon that Luther considers most reliable. This general language applies to all mankind with the exception of Christ alone or, if you wish, of the blessed Virgin, supposing that the mother and Son can be counted as one. I say this because some interpret 'all the way to one'[1361] as 'all the way to Christ,' so that we should take it that an exception is made for Christ.[1362] But actually, in my judgment, the true meaning of the prophet is that 'all the way to one' has the same force as if he had said 'not even one' and that 'not even one' is equivalent to 'none' – though this phrase 'all the way to one' is not added on to this psalm, which is either Psalm 13 or 52.[1363] And so I believe that this language applies to everyone in the fashion that I explained earlier; in one way the truth of the general language is valid, even though there are a few to whom it does not apply; in another way, it is valid if the general expression does not refer to individual persons but to groups of individuals, so that we take it to mean that there is no nation under the heavens which is not mostly corrupted by such vices and others like them.[1364] By such a figure of speech we say that a whole city is infected if

* * * * *

[1358] Rom 3:19

[1359] Origen *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos* 3.6 PG 14 939

[1360] Isa 59:7; Rom 3:13, 15

[1361] Latin *usque ad unum*, usually translated 'not even one'

[1362] Augustine *Enarrationes in psalmos* 13.2 CCSL 38 86:12–20

[1363] LB has 'Quamquam haec particula, *usque ad unum*, non additur in hoc Psalmo, quae ex XIII aut LII,' substituting *ex* for *est* through a printer's error. Erasmus means that the phrase *usque ad unum* 'all the way to one' was not added to the Hebrew of Pss 13 and 52, as some phrases from Romans 3 were added to Ps 13 (see 653 and n1355 above), but were present in the original Hebrew.

[1364] See 646–7 above.

no part of it is free of the plague or there are very few who are not infected. But if someone wants to press such language by the exact rules of dialectic, we will tell him that 'the greatest justice is the greatest injury'[1365] and he will be forced to interpret many other passages by the same rule. When he is completely unable to do this, he will allow us willy-nilly to interpret this passage – or at least some phrases in it – according to common sense. Let me add that this passage is not directed at anyone except those capable of such crimes, that is, not at infants but at adults. Finally, the whole gamut of wrongdoing falls upon the whole human race, but each single feature of it does not apply to each individual. For example, if someone said that all the Ninevites were corrupted by various sorts of wrongdoing such as adultery, poisoning, robbery, and murder,[1366] he would not mean that each individual did these crimes but that many of them did. Therefore Luther is acting shamelessly when he twists the text to apply the worst of these crimes to individual persons. 'All have sinned and lack the glory of God.'[1367] This is true, but 'Everyone says in his heart, "There is no God"' and 'Everyone has poison under his tongue'[1368] cannot be said about individuals, not even the gentiles. Moreover, when Paul says, 'There is no one who does good,'[1369] either it is said hyperbolically, or no one is said to do good because very few do so, or else let us take it to mean not just any good but that good for which we were created and which is rendered to the blessed, which can only be bestowed by him who alone is truly good. Now if Luther, wildly exaggerating with his hyperboles, proclaims that there is nothing even in the most excellent part of mankind, namely reason, except the profoundest ignorance of God, and in the part next to it, the will, nothing but the greatest hatred and contempt for God,[1370] he fails to notice that, by wildly overemphasizing these crimes while he is intent on winning, he makes Paul contradict himself in the very same passage. How can it be consistent for the Apostle to mean now[1371] that those about whom he wrote earlier: 'upon all the unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness,' and again 'those who recognize the justice of God which condemns those who do such

* * * * *

[1365] *Adagia* I x 25

[1366] In the book of Jonah God sent the prophet to condemn the sinfulness of the inhabitants of Nineveh.

[1367] Rom 3:23

[1368] Ps 13:1,3; Rom 3:13

[1369] Rom 3:12, citing Ps 13:1

[1370] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 761:24–37 / LW 33 254

[1371] That is, in Romans 3

things as worthy to die, yet they not only do them but also agree with those who are doing them,' that those same persons are in the grip of the deepest ignorance of truth, morality, and God? This concerns the recognition of morality. Concerning the recognition of God he presents the case to them as follows: 'because, though they recognized God, they did not glorify him as God.'[1372] He was so far from attributing to them extreme ignorance of God that he reproached them because from known things they understood the invisible nature of God, and his sempiternal power, and finally his very deity itself.[1373] How far are these words of Paul from Lutherly hyperbole! But as for the will, in another place Paul speaks as follows, playing the role of a sinner: 'To will is at hand for me, but I find no way to carry out the good'; likewise, 'For since the gentiles, who do not have the Law, do by nature what belongs to the Law, etc.'[1374] In these words he attributes to them not only the wish to do good but the performance of it.[1375] And soon afterwards he introduces a courtroom for the conscience, as its thoughts defend and accuse each other in turn. Such ideas are not consistent with a Lutherly exaggeration of total ignorance. Similarly, he exaggerates the text 'All alike have become worthless': 'that is, altogether worthless.'[1376] 'Worthless in relation to the innocence of the gospel' is not enough for him. Likewise he overemphasizes 'There is no one who does good': 'With all their power they can do no good at all, but rather everything that they know and do is pervaded by the utmost malice.'[1377]

Up to this point I have been responding on behalf of the gentiles. Now let us go on to the Jews, to whom these texts properly apply, as Paul testifies. 'In their most excellent faculties there was the profoundest ignorance of God.'[1378] Then what is meant by this text: 'But if you are called a Jew, if you take consolation in the Law and glory in God and know his will and, instructed by the Law, you approve of what is fruitful, etc'?[1379] Does this sound like the most profound and total ignorance? And yet this is said about wicked Jews. It is reinforced by what follows: 'You teach others, but you do not teach yourselves. You preach against theft, but you

* * * * *

1372 Rom 1:18, 32, 21
1373 Rom 1:19–20
1374 Rom 7:18, 2:14
1375 That is, they do some good but cannot carry it out perfectly
1376 *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 761:26 / LW 33 254
1377 Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 761:24–30 / LW 33 254. Cf Rom 3:12 and Ps 52:4.
1378 Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 761:16–26 / LW 33 253–4.
1379 Rom 2:17–18

steal.'[1380] The Apostle accuses both groups: the gentiles because they recognized God by their natural powers, but they did not glorify him as God; the Jews, because, although they were instructed by the Law to know what they should avoid or seek, they turned their thoughts elsewhere. For he could not have justly accused their will if he had not attributed knowledge to them. But Luther, completely depriving mankind of knowledge and will, rightly professes that God both saves and damns persons who do not deserve their lot, whereas Paul says in the same passage, 'God is not a respecter of persons.'[1381] But if he saves some and damns others with no regard for their deserts and placing no importance on free will, how can it be that there is no distinction of persons with God?[1382] When Luther has undone these knots, then let him carry on all he wants, overemphasizing individual deeds with his supertragical exaggerations. For he spends several sections doing that. As it is, the more he exaggerates, the more the Apostle contradicts himself! When these points are recognized, it is clear to anyone on the face of it how banal are those supertragical thunderclaps of his: 'Therefore Christ redeems only the lowest part of a man; the most excellent part is its own redeemer.'[1383] If you look at these smokescreens from afar, you would think there is something to them; if you bring your gaze up closer, they are sheer tomfoolery. Didn't *Discussion* candidly profess that both the reason and the will of mankind are vitiated by the sin of Adam, and even more so by our own sins?[1384] But to say that no good remains in either the reason or the will not only goes against common sense but is even a wicked thing to say, since Paul attributes so much good to pagan philosophers and vicious Jews.

But he cheats us with verbal fallacies:[1385] whenever I say 'good,' he takes it to mean only the good which makes us blessed; when I say 'understand,' he takes it to mean perfect knowledge; when I say 'to will,' he takes it to mean that it is effective for justification without grace. And at the same time he makes many outrageous inferences: 'If the residual effort is good, then what he says about them being subject to sin is false.'[1386]

* * * * *

[1380] Rom 2:21

[1381] Rom 2:11

[1382] That is, God would be distinguishing one person from another by arbitrarily favouring one over the other

[1383] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 744:11–14 / LW 33 227–8

[1384] *A Discussion* CWE 76 23–4, 27

[1385] Erasmus here Latinizes παραλογισμοῖς.

[1386] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 760:34–5 / LW 33 253; cf Rom 3:9.

What is he saying? Though he teaches us that even the justified are subject to sin in any work whatsoever, indeed are subject to the reign of Satan, he is shocked if any effort for good can be said to be in a person who is not yet reborn. I take 'good' not as absolutely good but as something that is at a stage leading towards the good, just as we say that soil is fertile not because it produces a large crop but because, if cultivated, it can produce something and even now gives some spontaneous signs of that fact, inviting, as it it were, the diligence of the farmer. He also reasons in this fashion: 'Here Paul is totally intent on showing that grace is necessary for all men. If, however, they could initiate anything on their own, grace would not be necessary.'[1387] If one wished to quibble about the word 'initiate,' even the gifts of nature well up out of grace; but I take this up elsewhere.[1388] Doesn't this enthymeme fly directly in the face of ordinary common sense: If a sick man has any sort of digestion at all, he doesn't need a physician? If a wounded man can limp along in some fashion or other, he doesn't need a surgeon? Or to bring the comparison closer to home: if only the left eye is ailing, there is no need for an eye salve because the right eye is healthy? Or if someone has a fever, he doesn't need a physician because he does not have dropsy, pleurisy, catarrh, gout, or any of the other innumerable diseases? If any part of a person is healthy or semi-healthy, a physician is useless; so too if there is anything in a person that is not extremely evil, grace is useless. What could be more absurd than such exaggerations? Shame in an adolescent becomes moral uprightness in a grown man: it is not a perfect virtue, but still, it is a virtue rather than a vice, just as it is a quality that is a hopeful sign of full-fledged virtue. So too physicians more readily and easily treat a well-regulated body than one that is not. Health is lacking, but there are some vestiges of former health which, if they are activated by medication, can play their part in cooperating with the physician's skill and sometimes even overcome the disease without the efforts of a physician. In fact, of course, our comparison is defective in this respect: we were created without a physician, often we get well without a physician, but without God we have neither existence nor health. Finally, since even the vestiges that reside in a person remain because of God's goodness, to diminish them so much, to put them down, to destroy them is equivalent to making light of God's kindness. The haughtiness of the Jews was enormous, and thus the glory of the gospel was endangered; therefore Paul opposes their wicked self-confidence forcefully, with every weapon available to him. But

---

[1387] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 762:28–30 / LW 33 255

[1388] Cf 746 below.

I think he would have argued differently if he saw that a conviction of the necessity of all things now throws some people into despair and makes others abandon themselves to all kinds of sin, thinking to themselves: 'What is the point of refraining from evil deeds? If it is predetermined that I am damned, any effort I make is useless. If I am destined to be saved, there is no reason not to follow my every whim.' Why should we attach any importance to Luther's proving that all men are subject to God, that they are useless and reprobate if left to their natural powers, since Luther holds that a person, however justified, does nothing but sin in every work he performs, even in his best deeds – so much so that he deserves hell, as far as he himself is concerned? But because he has not proved this from Scripture, as he promised to do, I will not agree with him, as I promised to do.

He rejects the sophists, who will perhaps have the audacity, even after such mighty thunderbolts from Scriptures, to say that reason and will, though they err and deviate in act, still have the potency to perceive and seek something by their own power.[1389] He rejects this sophism for two reasons: first, by affirming here that 'does not seek God' means the same as 'cannot seek God'; and then by arguing that if it is not understood to mean this, Paul's argument would be pointless. Both these points he brings up are false.[1390] For it has been shown that mankind, by its natural powers, both knows God and understands what is right and wrong in most circumstances; and certainly if people do, then they can. Moreover I have made it clear that grace perfects the good of nature. But what does not exist cannot be perfected, and there is no helping, restoring, encouraging, or healing what has no existence. But the material upon which grace works is man's free will. And it is absolutely absurd to think that there is no room for grace if reason perceives something by its natural power or if the human will in some matters is somehow inclined towards the good. And what is imperfect is not necessarily wicked. When Pilate tried to save an innocent man, his will was not wicked, but it was imperfect, and for that reason he did not carry out what he wished.[1391] So too a person is said not to understand God if he does not know God as he ought to, not because he knows nothing whatever about God. He is said not to do good if he does not do the good that is appropriate to a human being, not because he does no good at all. So too, a person is said to be unwise if he has no wisdom about matters

* * * * *

[1389] Act and potency are scholastic categories derived from Aristotelian metaphysics.

[1390] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 762:19–20 / LW 33 255

[1391] Luke 23:4, 13–25

that are worthy of a wise man, not because he has no wisdom at all; and a person is said to be ignorant of rhetoric if he cannot perform the duty of a rhetorician, not because he knows nothing whatever about that skill. But to make an end of it, what is the point of all this? 'That all men may be taught that they lack the glory of God.'[1392] That is conceded even by the scholastics, who attribute more to free will than *Discussion*. And so Luther has won his point. But what point? 'That by his natural powers no person can know anything about God.'[1393] Paul himself, however, rejects this opinion, showing that the gentiles lacked the glory of God for the very reason that they did not worship the God they knew. Even Luther attributes to them a knowledge of God and morality, but claims they had it through the Law; and he attributes it even to wicked Jews. And he assigns to the grace of God the very fact that they learned through the Law what God is, what is right, and what is wrong. But the role played by the Law for the dense Jews was played for the intelligent Greeks by natural ability and created things, and nothing prevents us from calling these things God's grace, since Paul says: 'God revealed it to them.'[1394] The Jews, being dense, looked for signs; the Greeks sought wisdom. Take a look here and tell me whether Luther does not manifestly contradict himself. He says the wicked Jews understood God and the outlines of morality; and so reason perceives something by its natural powers. He will say: 'They saw it with the help of the Law.' But if the gentiles in their laws punished the same crimes as the Jews, it follows that by their natural powers alone they saw what is right or wrong in many circumstances.

With similar verbal trickery he overemphasizes that text of Paul, 'so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world be accountable to God.'[1395] If Luther stresses the literal meaning of the words, even four-footed beasts and angels will be accountable to God, that is, guilty, for the Greek is 'brought to trial.' But if we accept the Apostle's hyperbole here, recognizing that he called 'the whole human race' the 'whole world' to make his language more forceful, why do we not recognize the same sort of hyperbole when he is recounting the crimes of mankind? And here Luther reasons as he did a little earlier: 'If a person has any power left by which

* * * * *

[1392] Cf Rom 3:23.

[1393] Erasmus summarizes Luther's argument; cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 762:20–763:4 / LW 33 255–6.

[1394] Cf Rom 1:19–23.

[1395] Rom 3:19; Erasmus argues against Luther's interpretation in *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 763:5–31 / LW 33 256–7.

he can know or will anything by his nature, every human mouth is not stopped,' as if a person who confesses to many crimes but did not offend in some way or other were not accountable to the judge – in fact, one crime alone makes the whole man subject to punishment – or as if a sick man were not accountable to a physician if there is any part of his body which is, I will not say healthy, but rather unaffected by disease – in fact, one affliction is enough to make the whole man accountable to the physician. But what a neat trick he has here, where he quibbles that 'every mouth' is not to be understood as the mouth of every man, but rather as constituting the whole of any person, as if the individual powers of a person each had its own mouth. But why would it be absurd for reason to say: 'I see how much one should strive to be honourable and to avoid what is shameful, and you, O creator of nature, gave me the ability to see this. Complete your gift and add what is missing'? Is this understanding not accountable to God? It is accountable, first of all because its knowledge is imperfect, and second because it sees that it cannot attain to what it should strive for unless it is assisted by grace. But if we do not allow any part of a person to be not accountable to God, that is, not wicked and deserving of punishment, the same absurdity will recur in relation to the justified: if there is nothing good about them, why are they called just? If there is, then there will be something not accountable to God, that is, not wicked and deserving of punishment. If he should reply that this good is not due to the person but to the gift of God, I will say the same thing about the Jew who knows what is right from the Law and about the pagan who knows God from created things and through the power of his intelligence and by his own diligence and who sees what is honourable, at least in part. Here again I pass over his assumption that reason is totally sound, since my *Discussion* says the opposite. He always dwells in extremes and never acknowledges any middle ground: he claims that reason is either totally sound or totally wicked.

[*Can free will fulfil the Law?*]

I could here put an end to the argument, since the notion Luther introduces about the necessity of all things has been totally demolished, and I took issue mostly with that. For what remains, like much of his previous volume,[1396] is aimed at the opinion of the scholastics and contends that free will does not have any power to do a good work, that is, one that

* * * * *

[1396] Erasmus here presumably refers to *Assertio* article 36, which is devoted to free will and necessity. Article 36 is the second longest article in that work.

merits grace, and *Discussion* never undertook to defend the scholastic opinion. But I will touch on some points in passing. He exaggerates that text of Paul, 'By works of the Law all flesh will not be justified in his sight,' which he takes to mean that every person, of whatever condition or status, has nothing but sheer wickedness even in the most excellent powers of his nature, since even the works of the Law are condemned.[1397] I pass over his most insipid interpretation here, taking 'all flesh' to mean 'a person devoid of the Spirit,' since 'all flesh' signifies 'every person,' according to idiomatic Hebrew. Moreover, when he takes the works of the Law to include not only the ceremonial laws but even the commandments of the Decalogue, he is inconsistent with himself, since earlier he taught that no person could keep any commandment, and here he grants that all the works of the Law are performed by free will, but that they do not confer justification. For what are the works of the Law if not keeping the commandments of the Law? And among them are believing in God, loving God and one's neighbour. And so if he had said that the whole Law cannot be kept through free will without grace, we would readily subscribe to his opinion. Or if he had said that the external works of the Law, such as 'Thou shalt not kill,' 'Thou shalt not steal,' 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' do not confer justification if charity is lacking, we would tolerate such language. As it is, who ever heard anyone affirm that all the works of the Law are damnable and make a person wicked, and that it does not matter whether they have exercised themselves in the Law with the greatest zeal or with moderate zeal or with no zeal at all? Finally, although we grant that works do not confer justification, certainly they do not make a person wicked unless they spring from a perverse motive. And indeed, since among the Jews circumcision removed original sin, if works of the Law neither confer justification nor make a person wicked, what is the source of that supreme wickedness in the most excellent parts of mankind? If he says 'from evil deeds,' he agrees with me, but in that case the works of the Law are not performed. For the absence of primal innocence is not straightaway wickedness or injustice.

Here[1398] once again poor Jerome becomes his whipping boy and is in danger of being taken out of heaven and thrown headlong into hell because he taught that this passage in Paul is to be understood as applying to the

* * * * *

1397 Rom 3:20; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 763:32–764:12 / LW 33 257–8

1398 In this paragraph Erasmus is replying to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 764:13–765:5 / LW 33 258–9, Luther's important argument about the ceremonial character of works of the Law.

ceremonial laws,[1399] as if Jerome were the primary source of this opinion and it were not in fact propounded by all the Greek Fathers.[1400] For Jerome is more truly the translator than the author of his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, though even who did the translation is not certain. Luther is quite right to favour Augustine, who is such a pious and famous Doctor of the church, though even in this matter he is hardly consistent: first of all, he detests scholastic theology, which was generated by Augustine exactly as Minerva was from the brain of Jupiter; and then he impudently rages against Jerome, who was venerated by Augustine himself both for holiness and learning. As for the spirit in which he does this, let him look to it himself. But where is it that Augustine strongly disagrees? In his later dispute with Jerome, which he wrote when he was an old man, he does not dare to affirm anything but professes that the question is most difficult.[1401] But in the commentary he wrote on the Epistle to the Galatians he denies that the works of the Law justify those persons who trust in them in such

* * * * *

[1399] Pseudo-Jerome *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos* (on 3:20) PL 30 660; through an intermediary, Georgius Spalatinus, Luther had expressed to Erasmus his disagreement with Jerome's position and Erasmus' support of it on this point as early as 11 December 1516 (see Ep 501).

[1400] In interpreting Rom 3:20, the text Luther and Erasmus are discussing here, the Greek Fathers do not in fact take 'the works of the law' to mean the requirements of the ceremonial, Mosaic law. Origen in *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos* 3.6 PG 14 938 takes the law to be the natural law in men's hearts because verses 19–20 refer to 'the whole world' and 'all flesh' and so must refer to the gentiles as well as the Jews. Chrysostom in *Commentarius in epistolam ad Romanos* 7.1 PG 60 441–2 and Theophylact in *Expositio in epistolam ad Romanos* on 3:19–20 (PG 124 383–6) take 'law' here to refer to the whole Old Testament (which includes precepts such as those of Isaiah as well as the ceremonial law). But Chrysostom and Theophylact, commenting on a very similar Pauline text (Gal 2:16), do take 'law' to mean the Mosaic ceremonial law; see Chrysostom *In epistolam ad Galatas commentarius* 2.6 PG 61 643 and Theophylact *Commentarius in epistolam ad Galatas* 2.6 PG 124 978.

[1401] Ep 82.18–20 PL 33 283–5. Augustine and Jerome are not disputing specifically about Rom 3:20 but about Paul's rebuke of Peter for Judaizing (Gal 2:11–20). But the issue of justification by works of the Law is the same. Jerome takes the more extreme position that it is wrong for Christians ever to perform the works of the Law, whereas Augustine holds the more moderate (and Erasmian) view that it is permissible for Christians to relinquish the works of the Law only gradually, recognizing, of course, that they are neither necessary nor effective for justification. Augustine implies that the question is difficult, though he never says so explicitly, and he asks Jerome to correct him if his opinion is wrong (Ep 82.13–16 and 33 PL 33 280–2 and 290).

a way as to scorn the grace of God offered through the gospel.[1402] That much could be said about St Simeon[1403] or David himself. For he would not have been justified by the works of the Law if the coming of Christ had occurred in his era and if he had scorned the grace of the gospel, which is more abundant and hence requires more perfect righteousness. That is the reason Paul did not say simply 'will not be justified' but added 'in the sight of him' in whose eyes even the stars are not pure;[1404] soon afterwards he calls this the 'righteousness of God.'[1405] But these matters are beside the point. Once more, out of his hatred of Jerome, Luther denies that ceremonial works were lethal after the death of Christ.[1406] If he is talking about the Jews who lived in the early days of the dawning gospel, what he says is true. For they were allowed to preserve their ancient ceremonies so that the Law handed down by God might not be rejected disrespectfully but might become obsolete gradually and honourably, as long as they did not put any hope of salvation in such ceremonies. But who ever heard that the apostles tolerated the circumcision of the gentiles? For Timothy had only one Jewish parent, and yet Paul did not allow him to be circumcised until he sent him to Judaea.[1407] But after the grace of the gospel flashed throughout the world, the Jews themselves were not allowed to observe the ceremonial laws, even if they did not place any hope of salvation in them; this was not because such bodily works were good or bad in themselves, but because they hindered the propagation of the gospel by giving occasion of offence to the weak and support to wicked Jews. Hence Chrysostom cries out more sharply against Christians who fast in company with the Jews than he does against adulterers and drunkards.[1408] But Luther talks as if such ceremonies should be considered indifferent, like such things as standing, sitting, eating, and drinking, though even these actions are also deadly if they are performed otherwise than they should be. Furthermore, as for what Luther says, 'It is agreeable with this that anyone may do those things yet not be doing anything illicit,'[1409] that was true at one time among the Jews, but it is not true in an unqualified way. When Augustine spoke as Luther now

* * * * *

[1402] *Expositio epistolae ad Galatas* 17–19 PL 35 2115–17
[1403] Luke 2:25–32
[1404] Cf Job 25:5.
[1405] Rom 3:20–1
[1406] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 764:29–30 / LW 33 259
[1407] Acts 15:28–9, 16:1–3
[1408] *Adversus Iudaeos* 1.2 and 2.1–3 PG 48 846–7 and 857–62
[1409] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 764:32–3 / LW 33 259

speaks he was rebuked by Jerome and he gave thanks for the rebuke.[1410] But actually this comparison does not hold up, for we eat and drink, we sleep and wake to fulfil natural needs, we stand and walk for some useful purpose, but the observance of the Jewish ceremonies serves no useful purpose at all. And if we wish to heed some who speak with no impiety, a pious person, who does everything for the glory of God, acts meritoriously even when he eats, drinks, sleeps, and plays.

Nor is it relevant to the issue at hand that in the Old Law ceremonies were required as strictly as the moral commandments of the Decalogue.[1411] But if it is true, how does it happen that someone who keeps the sabbath does not sin while someone who gives alms does sin? For this is what that fellow has taught us: that however justified a person may be he sins in his works, however good. And so he infers that Paul is speaking about all the works of the Law, which include, as I said, the love of God and of our neighbour;[1412] and if that does not justify a person, what is there that can do so? But he makes he following argument: 'Since the part of the Law that prescribes ceremonies has been abrogated, they can no longer be called works of the Law, since that Law does not exist.'[1413] Such perspicacity! I ask you, by what figure of speech do we call those deeds works of the Law except that at one time the Law was in effect? And at that time it was being abrogated rather than had been abrogated; and it was abrogated to the extent that no one was to believe those works necessary to salvation. So far as its utility was concerned, it was to be abrogated gradually and only by the Jews. Luther says, 'He could have explicitly said, "The Law is abrogated."'[1414] What importance would it have had if the Apostle had said this, since the Lord himself explicitly abrogated the Law when he said, 'Up until John, there were the Law and the prophets,'[1415] which was certainly spoken to the Jews, not the gentiles. In fact, Paul eagerly proclaimed the same thing whenever he had the chance. But because of the invincible stubbornness of the Jews and in honour of the Law, which was handed down by God, some time was granted to it, just as, after the death of outstanding men who have deserved well of the commonwealth while they were

* * * * *

[1410] Ep 82.17 PL 33 282–3

[1411] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 764:35–7 / LW 33 259

[1412] Mark 12:28–31

[1413] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 765:1–4 / LW 33 259.

[1414] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 765:4–5 / LW 33 259

[1415] Luke 16:16, interpreted to mark the end of Judaism (the Law) and the beginning of Christianity (the gospel) alive, we carry them out to be buried with honour; we do not thrust them out of their houses.[1416] And whenever Paul fails to say that the ceremonies of the Law are to cease, he does so for the same reason that, when Peter preached Christ in Jerusalem and he himself preached Christ in Athens, they called him a man, making no mention of his divine nature.[1417] For this seems to be the primary reason assigned by scriptural exegetes that the Law was gradually phased out. Otherwise, what honour was there in keeping a Law that did no good and offered a stumbling-block to many persons? Or what affront would it have been to the Law if the apostles, after the arrival of the truth, had immediately preached that it consisted of shadows and types, to be read indeed, but not to be put into execution? Doesn't Paul teach quite explicitly that the Law has been abrogated when he calls it a 'tutor' whose authority lasts only 'until the time predetermined by the Father'?[1418] The same point had been foretold long ago by the prophets. But the Jews were not yet capable of accepting this prophecy; indeed Christ himself humoured their hard-heartedness on many points, lest they should have any feasible cause to recoil from the gospel. In doing so he incidentally confutes Luther's paradoxical doctrine that there is no opportunity for faith unless God seems unjust, whereas in fact God wishes to be seen as supremely just, since in so many ways he deprived the wicked of any excuse, in order to keep even those who perish from being able to look on him as unjust. And so I have shown that this passage cannot be understood to apply to all works whatsoever, since they include the love of God and our neighbour; and no one should be accursed if he relies on such works of the Law. What laws, then, is Paul talking about? Certainly it is about the ceremonial laws and, if we think something more should be added, about external works.

For, since, as Luther agrees, Paul is making the same point when he writes to the Romans as when he writes to the Galatians, and his language is to be interpreted according to the subject matter, as Luther showed, it is clear that Paul is angry at the Galatians not because they had been commanded to abstain from theft, adultery, perjury, false witness, but because they had accepted circumcision and observed the new moon, the sabbath, and discrimination in foods according to Jewish ceremonies. And what is said earlier about Peter conforming to Jewish practices is not concerned with just any works but with the selection of food and other Jewish ceremonies.[1419] And writing to the Romans, who themselves had also been coaxed into conformity with Judaism long ago, he mentions circumcision and works. But what works? Theft, adultery, sacrilege, blasphemy.[1420] For those who do not do such things are not for that very reason justified. To be sure, without abstaining from them there is no justification, but justification does not result merely from abstaining. Accordingly, Moses declares those who do not abide by all the precepts of the Law to be accursed, because there is no salvation for those who violate the commandments of the Law;[1421] Paul, on the other hand, declares those who rely on the Law to be accursed,[1422] namely those who glory in the Law in such a way that they nevertheless do not observe the principal commandments of the Law, and even more those who clung stubbornly to it, even though it should have been abrogated in so far as it presents shadows and types. For Paul does not say 'who keep the Law' but rather 'who rely on the Law,' that is, who depend on it totally, not acknowledging the grace of Christ but attributing justification to their own powers. Now, though we grant that a person can fulfil part of the Law by the power of free will, nevertheless he would sin if he attributed justification to his own powers, since he has those very powers as a gift from Christ. Furthermore, since the whole Law looks towards Christ, it would be futile for him to observe the Law – indeed he would not even observe it – if he ascribed to the works of the Law and his own natural powers the glory that is due to the mercy of Christ.

[1416] Cf Augustine Ep 82.16 PL 33 282.

[1417] Acts 2:22–36, 17:31

[1418] Gal 3:24, 4:2

I do not deny that Paul sometimes divides a person into the flesh and the spirit, except that sometimes he adds a third part, the soul, which Luther always refuses to recognize. Certainly here he simply uses 'flesh' to mean 'a human being': 'No flesh will be justified by the works of the Law.' But he adds 'in the sight of God' to distinguish pharisaic justification from that of the gospel.[1423] And then, as for the text he quotes from Galatians 3, 'Did you receive the Spirit from the works of the Law or by hearing of the faith?'[1424] it is clear that the Apostle is speaking of ceremonial works, without which the Galatians received the gift of the Spirit. The same point applies to the texts 'Now justification by God is revealed apart from the Law' and 'We

* * * * *

1419 Gal 3:1–5, 2:11–12
1420 Rom 2:21–5
1421 Deut 27:26
1422 Gal 3:10
1423 Rom 3:20
1424 Gal 3:2; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 765:27–8 / LW 33 260

hold that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the Law.'[1425] For Paul does not think that adulterers, murderers, and thieves are justified. But that is what would follow if he thought that justification is bestowed by faith entirely apart from the Law, though, of course, someone who performs of his own accord more than is required by the Law is said to be free from the Law, since by surpassing it voluntarily he is not constrained by it.

After this Luther repeats the old hyperbole, 'Through the Law comes recognition of sin,'[1426] treating it as if human reason does not see anything at all, as if there is no striving for virtue by the human will, though in fact the laws of the gentiles punish the same deeds as the law of God and though the philosophers exhort people so ardently to be virtuous. Quite the contrary, the Law was laid down not because before it mankind perceived nothing, but rather so that they might discriminate more fully between what is just and what is unjust and so that the reproaches of the Law might keep them from taking a flattering view of their sins. But on this point I think enough has been said above. And once more *Discussion* is made into a laughing-stock because she reports the opinion of Augustine or, indeed, of all the ancient Fathers. I have already admitted that what free choice discerns and what the will seeks are imperfect,[1427] but I also profess that if we perform even that much, grace is ready to come to our aid.

He also distorts that text of Paul, 'Why then the Law? It was laid down because of transgressions, until the issue should arrive, etc.'[1428] And here once again Jerome takes a beating because he interpreted it to mean 'in order to repress transgressions.'[1429] How hatefully he fumes against a man whose memory has been held sacred by God's church for so many centuries! Why is Jerome said to be dreaming about this passage when he is following, or rather translating, so many Greek Fathers? Why do not Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Ambrose also share in the beating, since they give the same interpretation?[1430] Luther's interpretation is not entirely false, but see how hatefully he puts it forth: 'Because of transgressions, not indeed to

* * * * *

[1425] Rom 3:21, 28; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 765:28–30 / LW 33 260

[1426] Rom 3:20; in this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 766:8–34 / LW 33 261–2.

[1427] See 659–60 above.

[1428] Gal 3:19; in this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 766:35–767:18 / LW 33 262–3.

[1429] *Commentarii in epistolam ad Galatas* 2.3.19–20 PL 26 366

[1430] Chrysostom *In epistolam ad Galatas commentarius* 3.19 PG 61 654; Theophylact *Commentarius in epistolam ad Galatas* 3.19 PG 124 991; Ambrose *Commentaria in epistolam ad Galatas* 3.19 PL 17 356 repress them, as Jerome dreams, but to increase transgressions.'[1431] In Romans 5[:20] Paul says that the Law was introduced so that sin might abound; he did not say 'so that sin might be increased.' For it is one thing to be exacerbated and made known; another, to be increased. Certainly such novel language should have been avoided. And this was not the principal aim of the Law, though it followed as a consequence of the Law, and God turned this outcome to the good. But if you consider the goal of the Law, it was laid down to illuminate the path of simple people, to check the wicked and violent with fear so that they would not sin with complete impunity; and, if they did not cease, they would immediately be condemned as sinners by the Law. And so the Law either turned over a well-intentioned person to the grace prepared for him, or caused a person to sin less grievously and for that reason made him more susceptible to the healing of the gospel, or prevented a person from pretending he was not unjust, so that perhaps in this way he might take refuge in grace. I earlier refuted this argument: 'I would not have been aware of covetousness if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet."' For Luther concludes from this that reason of itself in no way distinguishes what is sinful from what is not;[1432] but in fact Paul here is not speaking in his own person but rather in that of someone who is quite ignorant and thinks that virtue and vice reside not in the mind but in outward deeds. Was Paul ignorant of what even the philosophers saw, that what is honourable and what is shameful consist in a mental condition, which is the only factor that renders a person either happy or unhappy? The rest of this section is merely bombast that I have already refuted more than once.

With the same sort of magniloquence he takes up what follows in Paul: 'Now, however, God's justice is revealed apart from the Law; the Law and the prophets bear witness to it through faith in Jesus Christ for all and upon all who believe in him. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and lack the glory of God; all are justified by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God set out as expiation through faith in his blood, etc.' 'Here,' he says, 'Paul speaks in real thunderbolts.' I grant it. But are they 'against free will'?[1433] I deny it. Against those who trust in their own powers? I agree. 'The Apostle distinguishes God's justification from that of the Law.'[1434] If by 'justification

* * * * *

[1431] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 766:38–767:1 / LW 33 262
[1432] Rom 7:7; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 767:12–13 / LW 33 263. See 362–7 above.
[1433] Rom 3:21–5; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 767:20–6 / LW 33 263
[1434] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 767:27 / LW 33 263

by the Law' Luther means 'pharisaic justification,' I go along with him; but if he means 'justification by the entire Law,' I do not, since the Law also teaches faith and charity, which a person does not achieve merely by his natural powers but with the assistance of grace, which was not lacking in ages past to the Jews who lived under the Law. It was revealed when Christ came; it did not originate then. Rather it was set forth more clearly and spread throughout the world more widely and abundantly. And it was revealed apart from the Law, that is, both to the Jews who had not observed the Law and to the gentiles who did not know it. But the interpretation that Christian justification exists apart from the Law can be taken in three senses: either that moral works of the Law are not required in baptized persons – which is an unholy sense; or that neither the Jews nor the gentiles when they approach the gospel are required to give an accounting showing that they have kept the Law, provided they repent and believe, and this is a true sense; or that no one is required to observe those commands which had been imposed on the Galatians by the pseudoapostles, and this is the truest sense of all. For I have already shown that Paul is dealing with such works in that passage. But Luther's interpretation – that those who had kept the commandments of the Law as best they could, not completely but nevertheless sincerely, were not at all more capable of accepting grace, or that the gentiles who had lived lawfully and moderately to the best of their ability under paganism were not at all more apt to accept grace[1435] – is very far from the truth as I see it. An example is the Ethiopian, who was so easily converted by Philip,[1436] and Paul, who was so suddenly changed into a different person;[1437] but we do not read that Herod or the Scribes and Pharisees were converted, even though they had seen so many miracles, even though they knew the Law by heart. But if morally good works render a person more capable of accepting grace, and if the observance of the Law by a Jew before the promulgation of the gospel made him more fit for the gospel – and Luther concedes that these works are performed by the power of free will – then he is wrong when he concludes that free will is of no account. Again, if he concedes that grace is not given to those unwilling to receive it – and by means of free will we can turn away from grace, and if we do not turn away from it, we make ourselves available to it – it is clear that here too free will has some function. And his interpretation is ridiculous

* * * * *

[1435] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 767:26–768:9 / LW 33 263–4

[1436] Acts 8:26–40

[1437] Acts 9:1–19

when he says 'apart from the Law, that is, apart from everything that free will can do.'[1438] We grant that free will cannot arrive at God's justification by its own power without grace, but that does not mean free will does not exist. Finally, we are not arguing here what God can do but what he does by his ordained power[1439] and what he shows us in Scripture that we can hope for.

You have heard one marvellous thunderbolt, but listen to one that is even more marvellous: 'Paul says that God's justice avails in everyone and upon everyone who believes in Christ.' Where the Apostle says 'reveals' he changes it to 'avails' so as to support his dogma better. God's justice was revealed to all. Why did it not avail for everyone? To be sure, it would have availed for everyone if there were no free will. In so far as the offer of grace is concerned, there was no distinction between Jew and Greek; but in so far as the inclination or disinclination of the will is concerned, there was a very considerable difference. 'But Paul,' he says, 'divides the whole human race into two groups, those who believe and those who do not; to believers he gave righteousness; to unbelievers he denied it. But free will is something different from faith.' Why not? For the eye is not the same as light. 'But Paul says that whatever is apart from faith is not justified in the sight of God. If not justified, then unjustified, and if it is unjustified, it has to be sinful.'[1440] Lest someone should object here by proposing some middle ground, he pronounces that with God there is no such thing but rather that whatever exists is either good or bad. But earlier he conceded that there are some intermediate things, such as he claims the ceremonies of the Mosaic law are, since they do not justify anyone or commend anyone to God, and yet whoever observes them does nothing that is forbidden. And he cannot wiggle out of it by saying that there he meant intermediate things in human affairs, since he is clearly dealing with things that either commend us to God or do not; read the conclusion of section 223.[1441] But this argument has

* * * * *

[1438] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 767:37–40 / LW 33 263–4.

[1439] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 50 n227.

[1440] Rom 3:21–2; in this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 768:10–26 / LW 33 264.

[1441] At the end of the prefatory letter to *Hyperaspistes 1* Erasmus noted that he sometimes put in the margin the numbers of Luther's sections. See CWE 76 94 and n8. Luther's section 223 is *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 767:19–768:9 / LW 33 263–4. In the latter part of that section Luther had seemed to allow that good works exist apart from grace: 'And suppose I allow that free choice can by its own endeavor achieve something – good works, let us say, or the righteousness of the civil or moral law – yet it does not attain to the righteousness of God ...

already been confuted, for just as there is such a thing as an unfinished and imperfect faith, so too there is an imperfect righteousness like that of the centurion Cornelius. For he received perfect faith from the teaching of Peter and righteousness from the sacrament and the Holy Spirit.[1442] Now imagine for me some pagan who never heard the mysteries of the faith (and it was through no fault of his own that he did not) but has his mind set on learning what is best and living blamelessly in so far as he can through the guidance of nature; I do not think that everything he does is sinful, whether it be loving his wife and bringing up his children in a wholesome way or contributing as much as he can to the common good. 'But his good deeds do not confer evangelical justification.'[1443] I grant it, but they do invite the kindness of God to add on his own what is lacking to the powers of nature.

Behold, another thunderbolt: 'All have sinned and lack the glory of God,' a text I discussed earlier.[1444] Here he cries out: 'I beg you, could he have said it any more clearly? Imagine someone who acts through free will; would he sin in that endeavour of his? If he does not sin, why does Paul not make an exception of him? Certainly when he says everyone, he makes an exception of no one in any place, at any time, in any work, in any endeavour. For if you make an exception of a person for any endeavour or effort, you make a liar out of Paul, etc' – all of which Luther thunders out with great force but with great effrontery.[1445] For there is no less effrontery if you say that all who lack the glory of God sin in all their actions and faculties than if you were to say that all who lack the help of a physician are ill in every part of their bodies. And here, in order to make the passage give more support to his dogma, they[1446] make justification either active or passive and glory either active or passive; a Hebraism is summoned up and interprets lacking the glory of God to mean not having anything that has glory in the sight of God.[1447] If to have glory is to recognize the gift of God with joy, then free will has something in which it has glory in the sight of God. If to have glory is to attribute what one has to oneself, not

* * * * *

But if it does not attain to the righteousness of God, what will it gain if by its own works and endeavors (if this were possible) it achieves the very sanctity of angels?'

[1442] Acts 10

[1443] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 767:42–768:1 / LW 33 264

[1444] Rom 3:23; see 655 above.

[1445] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 768:27–33 / LW 33 265

[1446] The plural pronoun, where one would expect 'he,' seems to refer to Luther's followers.

[1447] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 768:35–8 / LW 33 265

even the righteous have anything in which to glory in the sight of God. As for his universal challenge for anyone to step forward if he can sincerely say about something that he has accomplished by the power of free will 'I know this pleases God,' I will bring forward those people who, for all their inclination to sin and their hatred of their diseased state of mind, nevertheless seek the grace of the Spirit by almsgiving and other pious endeavours; they can say, 'I have high hopes that God will have mercy on me and lend aid to my efforts by his grace.' For to favour, I think, means to be mindful of and to lend aid. But Luther demands that the person pronounce with certainty that these things please God. And if he does not, Luther takes any doubt about the favour of God to be a sign of disbelief.[1448] I hardly know whether any justified person can pronounce with certainty that any particular deed of his is acceptable to God, although in general he believes with certainty that God will not fail his own. But if the confidence of the justified is joined with fear and trembling – and Luther granted this before, teaching that fear arises from necessity and confidence from uncertainty[1449] – we believe with certainty that a person is justified through faith and charity. But whether this person or that has the true gift of faith and charity I do not think we can know with certainty unless God reveals it to someone through special inspiration, as happened to Paul, who said, 'I know who it is in whom I have believed and I am certain, etc.'[1450] But I know pious persons who were dissatisfied with themselves because in all their life they never felt the inner consolation of the Spirit and who persisted all the more intensely in prayer and good works in hopes that God would deign to bestow that grace. These, I suppose, Luther would condemn for disbelief. Since this is the case, Luther is wrong when he concludes that free will, since it lacks that glory, is continually guilty of the sin of disbelief, for all its powers, endeavours, and efforts.

[*'Congruous' and 'condign' merit*]

He lets fly another thunderbolt: 'justified by the free gift of his grace.'[1451] Here he jumps for joy. 'What is this free gift? What is the meaning of his grace? If there is merit, where is justification freely given as a gift? Where are the defenders of free will now?' Once more poor *Discussion* is indicted because she constantly argues thus: 'If there is no freedom of choice, what room is there for merit? If there is no room for merit, what room is there for rewards?'[1452] Up to this point, what Luther says is not entirely false, except that where *Discussion* says 'if there is no freedom of choice' he quotes it here as 'if there is no free choice,' as if I meant that the choice is free in an unqualified way. And then, where *Discussion* claims that there is some kind of merit, but a kind that a person cannot attribute to himself, either because it is of the slightest importance when compared to grace or because the whole process has its origin in God, here he reports it as if I meant merit that had an equal claim on reward. But when he adds, 'But to what is it to be attributed if someone is justified without merit?'[1453] that is nowhere to be found in *Discussion*, but rather Luther added it out of his own supremely free choice, unless he would prefer to have his choice called the slave of him who is the father of lies.[1454] Quite the contrary, throughout the whole argument *Discussion* avoids saying this so that salvation may not be attributed to human merit but rather that all may be assigned to grace. Concerning the damned she asks to whom their downfall should be attributed if there is no freedom of choice but everything happens by sheer necessity.[1455] But if *meritum de congruo* is taken to mean a certain sort of human worthiness[1456] which God in his kindness accepts from the effort of our powers, however little it may be worth, and if we take *meritum de condigno* to refer to duties performed, in whatever way, with the assistance of grace, then justification given as a free gift and salvation given as free gift are not inconsistent with the term 'merit.'[1457] Imagine two poor men, one of whom is wild and uncontrollable even in his poverty, the other who is temperate and makes good use of whatever he can get. A king makes the one wealthy and leaves the other in his poverty. What he gave to the one he enriched he gave as a free gift, and he gave it to one worthy of it, though the person had not merited it; and he had good reason not to give anything to the other one. For a person is said to be worthy of a favour if he accepts it eagerly, uses it well, keeps it in mind, and is grateful for it. For this response is attributed to him as merit.

[1448] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 768:38–769:23 / LW 33 265–6

[1449] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 746:36–747:7 / LW 33 232

[1450] 2 Tim 1:12

[1451] Rom 3:24; in this and the next paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 769:24–770:19 / LW 33 266–8.

[1452] *A Discussion* CWE 76 57

[1453] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 769:32 / LW 33 267

[1454] Satan (see John 8:44)

[1455] *A Discussion* CWE 76 75–6

[1456] LB has *indignitate* 'unworthiness' instead of *dignitate*, the reading of Froben's 1527 edition.

[1457] Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 770:4–10 / LW 33 267.

But if what Luther preaches is true, that there is no merit whatever, then there are many falsehoods in Holy Scripture, since there the merits of the pious are approved, and the wicked have thrown up to them what their evil deeds have merited. For when Luther changes merits into promises, that idea deserves laughter, not rebuttal. The servant in the Gospel who earned five talents owed all the profit to his master, who had given him the principal to invest. There was a certain worthiness here in so far as the principal was given to a person who the master knew would use it well. He is commanded to enter into the joy of the lord.[1458] In this instance the reward is still gratuitous, even though his worthiness is still approved of. For just as people are said to bestow benefits on those who are worthy of them because they give them to persons who are grateful and make good use of them, even though the donor is not giving anything that has been merited, so too God, who knows the worthiness of a person before the outcome is apparent, gives grace to those worthy of it, and from the unworthy he takes away even what he has given. And this can be said even if someone is suddenly called to grace from paganism and a very vicious way of life. As it is, in many persons the worthiness precedes the gift, as it did in the centurion Cornelius. Otherwise why are we told that his 'prayers and almsdeeds rose up in the sight of God'?[1459] And so this kind of merit is not inconsistent with the free giving of a gift. But in fact where did *Discussion* say that a person arrives at salvation through his own effort? She said that there is a certain natural effort or striving towards virtue or happiness, but the effort is imperfect and ineffective apart from grace.[1460] He also distorts the point that God looks favourably on one person because of his effort and scorns another person who makes no effort. Quite the contrary, God on his part offers himself to everyone; but to the person who makes himself available, God does not offer himself in vain; to the person who turns away, grace is offered in vain. And *Discussion* does not deny that God sometimes calls a person who makes no effort and does not want to be called.[1461] For God calls people in various ways: he called the Ethiopian, who had just returned from worshipping and was reading Isaiah;[1462] he called Paul when he was raging and breathing

* * * * *

[1458] Matt 25:14–21

[1459] Acts 10:4; *A Discussion* CWE 76 78

[1460] *A Discussion* CWE 76 79–80

[1461] *A Discussion* CWE 76 79–80

[1462] Acts 8:27–39

out threats and destruction;[1463] some persons he gradually prepares for his Spirit.

But what inference is he making when he says this: 'Do they not make God a respecter of works, merits, and persons?'[1464] As for merits and works, let Paul reply: he promises a prize to those who contend;[1465] he promises that deeds will be rewarded, that is, according to what was done while in the body.[1466] How can God be called a respecter of persons if he distinguishes the worthy from the unworthy? Quite the contrary, he would, rather, be a respecter of persons if he saved one person and threw another into hell with no regard to the merit of either one but only because it pleased him to do so. For if he considers everyone equally unrighteous, why should he draw some and not others except that he favours the one and not the other? Now Luther grants that sometimes the human will cooperates with grace. But if it is not absurd that the will should assist, as it were, cooperating grace, why should it be absurd for the human will to make itself available, leaning, as it were, on preparatory grace? These actions do not prevent the whole process from being a free gift. No one is saved without the assent of his will, and yet that does not mean we owe salvation to the will. For it does not follow from 'without this you are not saved' that 'through this you achieve salvation.' He grants that it is not without us that God works in us. If our contribution were not there, we would not be saved. Nevertheless we owe salvation totally to grace. If we make no contribution, God works in us without us. But if there is something of our own which God would approve of, why cannot we contribute something by accepting grace, and just as on the one hand the will cooperates with justifying grace, so too on the other hand why should it not cooperate with with the grace that prepares for justification? And what is meant by those who introduce merit *de congruo*? That there is some work that invites God's kindness without any particular grace? *Discussion* never said so, and if she had there would be no danger in it. Much less did she say that any work performed apart from grace has the same effect as merit *de condigno*.[1467]

But in this whole debate Luther confuses his own opinions with those of others. If he intended to defend all the opinions attacked by *Discussion*,

* * * * *

[1463] Acts 9:1–2

[1464] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 770:10–11 / LW 33 267; cf Rom 2:11 and *Hyperaspistes* 1 CWE 76 176.

[1465] 1 Cor 9:24; Phil 3:14

[1466] 2 Cor 5:10

[1467] On *meritum de congruo* see *Hyperaspistes* 1 CWE 76 28–9 and nn103 and 106.

he should also have defended the opinion of Karlstadt; if he meant to defend only his own opinion, he should have defended the necessity of all things and the total non-existence of free will for either good or evil. If he wanted to refute the opinion of the scholastics, which *Discussion* did not undertake to defend, why does he harass her with so many insults, such as 'Indeed *Discussion* is not wicked, but she speaks and acts only as a wicked person does.'[1468] Now[1469] we are compared with the Pelagians in such a way as to come off as worse than they, in two respects: first, they simply asserted merit *de condigno*, but we teach the same thing under false pretences and with deceptive language, distinguishing merit *de congruo* from merit *de condigno*; second, we place far less value on God's grace than the Pelagians, since they attribute a great deal to the free will which merits grace but we attribute only a tiny bit, which nevertheless merits the same grace. To respond briefly to this verbal sleight of hand: if Pelagius had said what I think the theologians mean, namely that the grace of God will not be lacking to anyone who does the best he can and that God in his kindness will attribute to him the very effort on his part to struggle towards inviting grace[1470] as a sort of merit, he would not have been condemned; and if this distinction between *de condigno* and *de congruo* had been discovered at that time, perhaps he would have avoided condemnation, at least in so far as this article is concerned, if he had rejected only merit *de condigno*.[1471] So much for the first slander. To the second I reply that we do not diminish the greatness of God's grace, but rather we emphasize the incomprehensible goodness of God, who takes in good part the tiny bit that human weakness is capable of and from his own store supplies what is lacking. We grant that the words 'to be justified as a free gift' are quite clear and also the words 'if from works, then there is no grace' and much else that we read in Paul. But those who attribute something to free will have a firm recollection of those very clear words. These words, however, were spoken against the Jews in favour of the gentiles, and they ought to be understood according to the subject matter, namely that those who come to the gospel are not given grace as if it were owing to the works of the Law, which the Jews tried to foist on the gentiles – for example, circumcision and the discrimination of food and days – or any other good deeds. If it were so given, the

* * * * *

[1468] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 770:18–19 / LW 33 268

[1469] In the rest of this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 770:20–771:13 / LW 33 268–9.

[1470] Yet another term for particular or preparatory grace

[1471] That is, if he had taught only merit *de congruo*

Jews would not have been accepted, since they did not observe the most important part of the Law, nor would the gentiles, who had no good works and came to the gospel from idolatry and fornication. Thus whatever is given in the absence of those works without which the Jews claim grace is not given is said to be given as a free gift. Still, it does not follow that no one can perform any deeds which invite grace. Pretending not to see this, Luther is just beating the air.

By the same stroke everything he heaps up in the next section[1472] is undermined; for when the columns are removed everything built on them collapses. And then he scoffs once more at all the Doctors of the church, who even in the clear light of Paul were so blind out of fear of not leaving any room for merit. Quite the contrary, out of pious reverence for Holy Scripture they did not dare to introduce the absolute necessity of all things, which was not approved even by the more sound philosophers, especially since they saw so much mention made in Holy Scripture of merits, rewards, payment for works, prizes, contests, and crowns. And so Luther is not more sharp-sighted than they but simply more reckless.

[*The true relation of faith and works; and final assessments of Paul*]

Nor does the example of Abraham undermine free will.[1473] For the Apostle brings it up in opposition to the Jews, who contended that none of the gentiles was to be admitted to the gospel without being circumcised and observing the rest of the ceremonial laws, as if they were the reason for salvation. But since Abraham, even when he was not circumcised – which was the sign of the Law – merited to be praised by God as justified because of his faith, Paul infers that the gentiles can also be justified by the same faith without circumcision. The Jews thought very highly of Abraham; in that patriarch they took much pride. Nor was there any more remarkable instance of fidelity: 'Beyond hope he believed in hope,'[1474] and he believed so firmly that he did not hesitate to sacrifice his only son Isaac when he was commanded to do so, though all his hope of posterity rested in Isaac. And so Paul brings up this instance to shut the mouths of the Jews and to

* * * * *

[1472] In this brief paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 771:14–33 / LW 33 268–9.

[1473] In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 771:34–772:11 / LW 33 270.

[1474] Rom 4:18; Erasmus' *praeter spem* 'beyond hope' where the Vulgate has *contra spem* 'against hope' was probably a deliberate attempt to improve the translation of *παρ' ἐλπίδα*.

give the gentiles confidence. And when Luther distorts what is said about the ceremonies of the Law and external works and applies it to all human actions, he does so in his usual shameless fashion. For the very fact that Abraham believed in God was a work, and this was not the first time Abraham began to believe in God, but he provided for us at that time a manifest example of faith. And so what, then, is Paul's point? To show that the works of the patriarch were all displeasing to God until the time when his belief in God's promises was imputed to him as justification? Not at all, for he believed before that, and his works were pleasing to God. Rather Paul is showing that his trust was so pleasing to God that by means of it he merited to be designated as justified, and that by the judgment of God himself, even though he was uncircumcised and not recommended by the observance of the Mosaic law. I pass over the fact that Luther repeatedly sings his old tune that whatever is not righteous is worthy of wrath and damnation, not recognizing any middle ground or any righteousness that is moral or imperfect.

But to one who works, Paul says, 'his reward is reckoned as due; to one who believes, faith is imputed as righteousness.'[1475] Paul means a Jew who works, one who is confident in his faith and charity and performs the works of the Law as if they conferred salvation. But righteousness is imputed to an uncircumcised believer precisely because his sins have been freely forgiven. For faith does not bestow justification if charity is lacking, for faith is the first approach to justification. This is confirmed by the testimony of David: 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin,'[1476] that is, whose sins are freely forgiven through faith. What follows makes this even clearer: 'How, then, is it reckoned, to the circumcised or the uncircumcised? Not to the circumcised but to the uncircumcised.'[1477] Does this not clearly show that Paul is dealing with the ceremonies of the Law or at least with external works, which can be performed on a human level without faith or charity? 'But Paul distinguishes one who works from one who believes.' True, but he distinguishes one who works like the Jews, without charity, trusting in bodily works, as too many Christians do even today, from someone who believes in a Christian way, namely with faith that works through love.[1478] These points easily dispose of the grand

* * * * *

[1475] Cf Rom 4:4–5; Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 772:12–35 / LW 33 270–2.

[1476] Rom 4:8; Ps 31:2

[1477] Rom 4:10

[1478] Gal 5:6

disquisition Luther makes here. For haste is necessary if the volume is ever to come to an end.

Nothing new is added in the next section[1479] except assertions, as he boasts of some battleline or other made up of the soundest of arguments which he could deploy if he wanted to and all but threatens to write a continuous commentary on all of Paul, interpreting him as he does here. It would be just as easy to interpret Homer or Virgil in this way.

The next section[1480] contains nothing but empty bombast and vigorous assertions and hyperbolical exaggerations which we have heard and rejected time and again, and hence we will not detain the reader by reciting and refuting them. He boasts that he has already won the victory, and if we will not admit that, he is ready to deploy all of Paul against us. And that would be well and good if anyone would permit him to interpret Scripture all by himself and as he sees fit, rejecting the opinions of all others. But unless I am deceived, just as Paul very vigorously opposed trusting in human works because he saw that to do so placed the glory of the gospel in jeopardy, so too, if he were to see today how very many, because of the denial of free will and the introduction of absolute necessity, either despair or live complacently, as if it made no difference whether a person did good or evil works as long as they are confident that God paid the price for mankind's sins and will grant eternal life to all who believe in him, he would defend free will more vigorously and extol the power of nature still left in mankind, as he does when he reproaches the philosophers for their wickedness.

He proceeds to bear down on us with two words used by Paul, flesh and spirit.[1481] In Romans 8[:8–9] Paul writes: 'You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if only God's spirit dwells in you. But if someone does not have the Spirit of Christ, such a person does not belong to him.' From these words he infers that all who do not have the Spirit of Christ are in the flesh, and that those who do not belong to Christ belong to Satan. We grant this also, as Luther teaches elsewhere: all, however righteous, are simultaneously under the reign of the Spirit and that of Satan because even in them the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. 'But what follows eliminates free will: "Whoever is in the flesh cannot please God." And so does what precedes: "The wisdom of the flesh is death, but the wisdom of the Spirit is eternal life"; and "The wisdom of the flesh is

* * * * *

[1479] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 772:36–773:30 / LW 33 272–3

[1480] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 773:31–774:16 / LW 33 273–4

[1481] In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 774:17–39 / LW 33 274–5.

not obedient to the Law of God, for it is unable to be so.'"[1482] What if I reply that these texts apply to the Jews who gloried in the letter of the Law but lacked the Spirit? For that was the starting point of this disquisition, although Paul, as he usually does, seems to draw out the discussion at length, touching on points marginal to his main subject. But what does Luther infer from them? That free will, because it is in the flesh, cannot attain to the Spirit by its own power? This I grant most willingly. That whatever it attempts is wicked? I have already shown that this inference is false. That it does nothing good? I have already made a distinction in the term 'good.' Nor would it be absurd if some malefactor should be said to be pleasing to God in so far as God judges him to be suitable for receiving grace. For if a king sees people fighting against him on behalf of their lords, however wicked they may be, with great force and fidelity, he nevertheless tries to win them over to himself, hoping that they will fight for him with similar fidelity and eagerness. Whether Paul sinned when he persecuted the church of God, I will not decide at the moment. The Law prescribed that if there were some prophet whose teachings differed from the Law, he was to be eliminated. He had not seen Christ teaching and performing miracles; he had not heard the apostles. But he had heard that a certain Jesus was somehow designing the destruction of the Law and that by unanimous consensus the priests, Scribes, Pharisees, elders, and the people had arrested him, charged him, convicted him, condemned him, and raised him up on the cross and that his surviving apostles were devising the same mischief. In his heart he was pious; in the persons and facts, he was wrong. But however greatly he sinned – and he admitted it himself – still, from his mistake, God judged that he would be a vigorous defender of the gospel, just as in a woman a miscarriage is not a good work of nature, but it gives promise of her fertility, and for an adolescent to blush is not a virtue, but still it bespeaks a temperament suited to virtue.

He rejects the interpretation of Origen that mankind is divided into three parts: the spirit, the soul, and the flesh.[1483] But since it is clear that Paul does this, let Luther explain to us what that third part of a person is, since he himself insists on no more than two. Origen is dreaming because

* * * * *

[1482] Rom 8:8, 6, 7; Erasmus is paraphrasing *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 774:30–9 / LW 33 274.

[1483] Origen often explains that man consists of three parts: the spirit, the flesh, and between them the soul, which can join itself with the spirit above it or the flesh beneath it; see *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos* 1.5, 1.18, 6.1, 9.24 PG 14 850, 866, 1057, 1226. In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 774:39–775:18 / LW 33 75.

he does not prove his own interpretation, and Luther proves his points by adducing such violent interpretations! Is to assert the same as to prove? 'A bad tree cannot produce good fruit.'[1484] If the fruit is human works, Luther teaches that not even the works of the justified are good. And he takes good fruit to mean not just good in any sort of way but good in the manner of the gospel; and we grant that free will cannot perform such works without the assistance of grace. If bad men give good gifts to their children,[1485] are adulterers sinful when they provide for their children according to the law of nature and of God? And so, just as some are said to be good not because they are endowed with perfect virtue but because they have made some progress towards probity, so too in Luke 11[:13] the Lord called his disciples bad not because they were extremely vicious but because they were not perfectly good. If he had meant they were bad and wicked, he would not have added: 'How much more will your heavenly Father give from heaven a good spirit to those who seek him?' And what is the relevance here of that text 'Everything that does not spring from faith is sin'?[1486] For there Paul is talking about those who eat flesh against their consciences. For a person sins if he does something which is not a sin but which he judges to be so because of the weakness of conscience. This evidence could have been cited more appropriately at another place.

Then again, as for his citation from Isaiah 10 (though it is 65), 'I was found by those who were not seeking me; I appeared openly to those who did not ask about me,' how does it impugn free will?[1487] The Law promised Christ[1488] to the Jews; rejected by them, grace went over to the gentiles, who did not expect it. This offers more support for free will: the Jews were rejected because in the blindness of their perverse desires they spurned the grace offered to them, and undoubtedly they did so through free will; the gentiles, because they erred through ignorance, eagerly accepted grace once the word was preached to them, their free will responding, as it were, to grace. Furthermore, so far as individual persons are concerned, there were some who sought the Lord, both among the Jews and among the gentiles,

* * * * *

[1484] Matt 7:18, cited by Luther *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 775:5–6 / LW 33 275

[1485] Matt 7:11, cited by Luther *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 775:10 / LW 33 279

[1486] Rom 14:23

[1487] Erasmus replies in this paragraph to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 775:19–776:3 / LW 33 276–7. Here Luther has simply 'exemplum illud capi 10, ex Esaia adductum' ('that example in chapter 10, taken from Isaiah'). As Erasmus should have known and perhaps did know, Luther meant chapter 10 of Romans (Rom 10:20), where Paul quotes Isa 65:1.

[1488] 'Christ' is here equivalent to 'the anointed one, the Messiah.'

that is, some who lived in such a way as to be capable of the grace that would come. And so if Luther means that those who prepare themselves for grace are seeking the Lord, even the Jews who were living according to the Law were seeking the Lord. What is said here applies equally to all mankind, none of whom sought grace but accepted it when it was offered even though it had not been sought. Now the saying of the prophet has two parts, one of which applies to the disbelieving Jews, the other to the gentiles who submitted to the gospel. For when he says, 'Lo, here I am, here I am, to a nation that did not invoke my name,' it was said about the gentiles. What follows, 'I stretched out my hands all day to a disbelieving people,' applies to Israel, according to Paul's explanation.[1489] It is true that few of the Scribes and Pharisees, few of the philosophers submitted to the gospel, because they claimed righteousness for themselves through their own powers. Free will was not to blame, but rather their wicked desires, which had darkened free will in them more than in others. Concerning Paul I have already said that he was swept along by a pious heart; he laboured under a straightforward mistake, which required no more than an admonition for him to put aside; Christ suddenly changed him from a wolf to a lamb.[1490] But he does not do that for everyone: he gradually allures many and shapes them for grace. The Scribes and priests were not mistaken in a similar way. Accordingly, when Luther says that for the Jews much is attributed to free will and for the gentiles there is nothing to be attributed to it, both his statements are hyperbolic. For even among the gentiles there were some who on a natural level did what the Law requires, who strove for righteousness and happiness; and among the Jews the densest ignorance was combined with perversity: seeing they did not see, hearing they did not hear.[1491]

[*The testimony of John the Evangelist: is free will of 'the world' and of 'the flesh'?*]

After these points he takes out of John that terrible word 'world,' which even all by itself is sufficient for the slaughter and annihilation of the entire cohort of free will.[1492] There can be no doubt that in the Gospels the word 'world' sometimes signifies the whole area of the earth – hence the

* * * * *

[1489] Rom 10:20–1; Isa 65:1–2

[1490] A variation on the proverb *agnum ex lupo eripere* 'to snatch a lamb from a wolf' (Otto no 893)

[1491] Cf Matt 13:13.

[1492] In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 776:4–29 / LW 33 277–8.

apostles are commanded 'to go out into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature'[1493] and in this very passage as well, 'He came into the world and the world was made by him';[1494] sometimes it means persons who love perishable things more than heavenly things – 'You are not of the world; I have chosen you out of the world.'[1495] But what do you think we should understand here by 'world' when John says 'and the world did not recognize him'?[1496] 'The human race.' Just so. Why should it be surprising if the light of nature does not comprehend that light which the angels can hardly comprehend: divine nature joined with human nature in one person; a person born of a virgin; three persons, one God; the whole race of mortals condemned for the sin of one person and redeemed by the death of one person? I grant that this light could not be attained by free will or that world devoid of God's Spirit. But that does not immediately mean that free will sees nothing – which is Luther's ridiculous inference: 'The world hates Christ; the whole world is in the power of the evil one; the world, that is, free will, is under the reign of Satan.'[1497] Ambrose gives a much more correct explanation in his book *The Calling of the Gentiles*, that this word, namely 'the world,' is a general expression including the whole human race made up of the good, the mediocre, and the bad, but in such a way as to consist mostly of the bad; and so, in the idiom of Scripture, what applies to the mass of mankind is said to be of the world.[1498] For this reason there was in the tent of the ark a holy place called *κοσμικόν*, that is, 'worldwide,' which accepted not only Jews and proselytes but any nation whatever.[1499] And so when the world is said to be 'in the power of the evil one,'[1500] it is to be understood that the mass of mankind is such. And 'whatever is in the world is the lust of the flesh and the pride of the eyes and the pride of life'[1501] because most mortals are such even today, and were even

* * * * *

[1493] Mark 16:15

[1494] John 1:10

[1495] John 15:19

[1496] John 1:10

[1497] Erasmus summarizes *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 776:15–21 / LW 33 277.

[1498] *De vocatione gentium* 3 PL 17 1084

[1499] Interpreting the phrase *ἅγιον κοσμικόν* – 'cosmic sanctuary' (Heb 9:1) Chrysostom says that the sanctuary is called 'cosmic' because it is accessible to all the people (*Homiliae in epistolam ad Hebraeos* 15 PG 63 117); Chrysostom explicitly lists Jews, proselytes, Greeks, and Nazarenes as having access. See Erasmus *Paraphrase on Hebrews* CWE 44 235 and n3 (page 363).

[1500] 1 John 5:19

[1501] 1 John 2:16

more so then. Thus Jesus came into the world which he had created and was not recognized by the world, not because no one did so but because few did. 'He came unto his own,' that is, to the nation of the Jews, 'and was not recognized by his own,'[1502] not because no Jews believed but because few did, compared to the crowd of unbelievers. He chose his apostles from out of the world. If the whole world hated God, did all the apostles do so before they were called by Christ? They were simple-minded, not wicked. They were ignorant of many things, but they did not hate Christ. Such were both Nathaniel and Nicodemus,[1503] who would have been saved through the Law if Christ had not come. But he called his apostles from out of the indiscriminate, simple-minded mob, just as before he had separated the Jews from the rest of the nations so as to make them his own special people, although among the gentiles there were some who were acceptable to God and among the Jews some who were wicked and among the apostles a Judas was discovered. You now have a good view of the word 'world' well and truly worked over.

'He gave to whoever accepted him the power to become sons of God, to those who believe in his name, who are not born of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but rather of God.'[1504] Here he promises us a new and unheard-of interpretation. He takes blood to mean the Jews who claimed[1505] to be the sons of the kingdom, because they boasted that they were descended from the prophets; he takes the will of the flesh to mean the zeal of the people who were trained in the Law and in works, namely the fleshly and those devoid of the Spirit; the will of man he takes to mean the zeal of everyone in general, whether under the Law or apart from the Law, the gentiles, for example, and people of any sort, so that this is the meaning: we do not become sons of God by birth or by an endeavour to keep the Law or any other human endeavour but only by a birth in God. 'If, therefore,' he says, 'they are not born of the flesh nor trained in the Law nor prepared by any human discipline, but are reborn from God, it is obvious that free will has no force.'[1506] And here once more he seeks help from

* * * * *

[1502] John 1:11

[1503] John 1:45–51, 3:1–15

[1504] John 1:12–13. In this and the next paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 776:30–777:20 / LW 33 278.

[1505] Basel 1527 and LB have *noluerint*, which must be wrong because Luther, who is being reported here, has *volebant*. The correct reading *voluerint* has been followed in the translation.

[1506] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 777:3–5 / LW 33 278

the Hebrew, which takes 'man' to mean any sort of person, just as it takes 'flesh' to mean by contrast people without the Spirit; but 'will' is taken to mean the highest human power, namely the principal element in free will. What marvellous insight, Luther! Interpret Scripture in this way and you will win! But what does he mean by that phrase 'I think'?[1507] Is that a proper expression for someone who denies that anything in Scripture is unclear to him and who professes to have the Spirit of Christ? But if he is not saying this sincerely and adds 'I think' out of dissatisfaction even with himself and for the sake of modesty, where is the victory he claims for himself from the words of John? Moreover, where is the simplicity that he demanded from us, even though here he hauls in so many figures of speech where there is no need for them whatever, simply because it was expedient in promoting the cause he has undertaken? Is it not crystal clear to anyone that John is here distinguishing between the spiritual birth by which we are born as the adopted sons of God from the fleshly birth by which we are born as human beings from other human beings according to the ordinary law of nature? Why is Luther not satisfied here with Augustine, who takes blood to mean the seed of a man and a woman – or if the word 'seed' is not acceptable, the material out of which the foetus is formed, 'flesh' being the woman, the 'man' being the husband, and 'will' the two embracing each other?[1508]

Earlier he tortured us with this word 'become,' inferring from it that man's will does nothing in this rebirth, even though from these words holy and reputable Doctors, one of whom is Chrysostom, show that human free will does something in the rebirth itself and in preserving the honour of adoption.[1509] For he asks why the Evangelist preferred to say 'he gave them the power to become sons of God' rather than 'he made them become the sons of God.' For that is how he should have spoken if we make no contribution to our rebirth, just as we make none to our birth. For it would be quite absurd for someone to say 'I thank God who gave me the power to become a man rather than a horse' instead of 'who made me a man rather than a horse.' Chrysostom replies that the Evangelist preferred to speak in this way for three reasons: first, in order to make it clear, by naming the power given by God, that no one can be shut out from this honour unless we shut ourselves out but rather that it is given to all, from the lowest to the highest; second, to signify that this grace is not poured out on us randomly

* * * * *

[1507] Luther wrote: 'I think that "man" has its Hebrew force, etc' (*De servo arbitrio* WA 18 777:5–8 / LW 33 278).

[1508] Augustine *In Ioannis evangelium tractatus 124* 2.14 PL 35 1394–5

[1509] Chrysostom *In Ioannem homiliae* 10.2–3 PG 59 76 or without our effort but rather that 'when we ourselves want it,' he says, 'then we seek for it, for it is in our power to become sons of God – that is, if we do not display a mind ready to receive it, divine grace will neither come to us nor work anything in us,' and so everywhere Chrysostom sets forth a choice which is not subject to violence or force but completely voluntary and free; and finally, John speaks in this way because through baptism God generously bestows on us the forgiveness of all our sins, but for us to stand firm in our innocence and not slip back into our filthy ways, that is a matter of our virtue and effort. To keep him from immediately branding Chrysostom as sacrilegious here, I will go right on to show that what he says is pious if we prefer to interpret what John means instead of weaving slanders out of his words. John could have said more briefly: 'who are not born from human coition but rather from God.' But by depicting the coition of man and woman, he suggests a similarity in spiritual rebirth. For properly speaking we are not born from God, since nothing is properly born from God except God, just as nothing is born from man except man. But when he mentions seed and the will of a man and a woman, he modestly suggests that in rebirth there is a sort of embrace between grace and free will and that, while grace is certainly superior, this spiritual conception does not occur without the assent of our will. Perhaps he also indicates that we do not become the sons of God suddenly, but first we are given the power which is offered to us by the message of grace; if we accept and embrace it in return, then the Spirit is poured out on us by which we cry out 'Abba, Father.'[1510] And that does not mean that a person can claim grace for himself, since he would not have had it if it had not been freely offered; but it is not given to those who are unwilling or turn away from it.

Then comes '"Of his fullness we have all received and grace for grace."'[1511] Here once more he brings in a new interpretation: 'grace,' not from any merit or effort but '"for the grace of Christ," just as Paul writes in Romans 5[:15]: "the grace of God and the gift in grace of the one man Jesus Christ."'[1512] What is Paul dealing with in these words? What but the grace of the gospel offered to all through Christ our redeemer? No Christian denies this. For that 'in' is here used to mean 'through' is clear from what follows: 'For if by the sin of one man death reigned through one man,

* * * * *

[1510] Rom 8:15

[1511] John 1:16

[1512] In this paragraph Erasmus is replying to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 777:21–778:16 / LW 33 279–80.

much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and gifts and justification live and reign through the one man Jesus Christ.'[1513] Here, then, Paul is not showing a new grace through which grace is conferred, but he is indicating the source of grace, from whom it flows, and the minister of grace, through whom it flowed to all mankind; that is why he also calls it an abundance, because through Christ it was poured out most lavishly upon all nations. Therefore John said 'grace for grace,' not to signify that there are two kinds of grace but that it is bestowed differently, just as Paul said 'from faith to faith.'[1514] Under the Law faith was in the promises; under the gospel, faith is in things manifested. So too under the Law grace was from Christ expected; under the gospel, from Christ manifested. The one was more sparing; the other, more abundant. And still we grant that this gift was given to us by God as a free gift through Christ, not because there was no one who did any good work but because in admitting someone to the gospel the merits of his previous life were not taken into account, provided the offered gift was accepted with alacrity. And so whenever Paul uses the words 'grace' and 'freely given,' he is not opposing free will in so far as it eagerly accepts the grace offered to it, but rather the haughtiness of the Jews, who relied on works and thought grace superfluous. But when Luther says that *Discussion* agrees with the sophists in saying that we 'obtain the grace of God and are prepared to receive it through our own efforts, if not *de condigno* then at least *de congruo*,'[1515] he is using the figure which in Greek is called ψευδολογία ['false reporting']. I recounted this opinion; I did not defend it. The rest of his ranting and raving, where he cries out that we deny Christ more wickedly than the Pelagians, has nothing to do with me, since it arises from a passage falsely expounded.

At last he brings out Nicodemus to undermine free will.[1516] If free will is flesh, wickedness, hatred of God, and whatever else, Nicodemus is hardly an appropriate example. For I think that he was in such a condition that it would have been necessary for him to be saved even if Christ had not come at that time. Nor is it surprising that he did not understand the hidden teaching of Christ by the power of free will, since only the prophets or those inspired by the spirit of prophecy understood it. But

* * * * *

[1513] Rom 5:17

[1514] John 1:16; Rom 1:17

[1515] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 777:36–9 / LW 33 279–80; see *A Discussion* CWE 76 29 n106.

[1516] In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 778:17–779:10 / LW 33 280–1. On Nicodemus see 590 and n1047 above.

such knowledge was not required of the general run of Jews; and I hardly know whether the prophets understood particular points as clearly as Christ after his arrival explained them to his followers. Accordingly, when Luther mentions many points that the world could not attain to by its natural powers, he is saying what is quite true: he is preaching to the converted. But by such arguments he does not persuade us that a person through free will neither sees anything nor can make any effort under the encouragement of grace.

He weaves together another syllogism, one which by means of antithesis is very antithetical to us. 'Christ,' he says, 'is called the way, the truth, and the life antithetically, that is, in contradistinction to their opposites. Accordingly, whatever is not Christ is error, is a lie, is death.'[1517] Unless we concede this, we make Christ superfluous, since he came to redeem mankind, who had a sound free will; we make him unjust, since he condemned the whole person, who was healthy in his most outstanding feature. I will require that Luther answer this question: is dialectic a method – that is, a way – of discovering the truth? If he says no, the whole chorus of the universities will cry out against him. If he admits that it is, he either will admit that dialectic is Christ or he will concede that there is some way that is neither Christ nor error. Dialectic demonstrates as necessarily true that if something is a man it is also an animal and, on the other hand, that if it is not an animal it is not a man. Mathematicians have most certain and demonstrable truths of which none is Christ and yet none is a lie. Concerning life it is pointless to dispute. Christ is the light. Does it follow that whatever is not Christ is darkness? In Luke 10 the Pharisee who tested the Lord asked what the greatest commandment was. How could he be praised by Christ for responding correctly if his response was false? And how did he discern the answer if he was totally in darkness?[1518] Luther will say that it was revealed to him through the Law, not through free will. Very well, but how did he know that among so many commandments this is the greatest? Surely he perceived this through free will. What need for a long disquisition? If whatever is not Christ is darkness, why did Luther himself at the end of this volume approve of the scholastic distinction concerning the light of nature, grace, and glory?[1519] I have already spoken about the philosophers, who according to Paul saw God's power and his sempiternal divinity by the light

* * * * *

[1517] John 14:6; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 779:11–13 / LW 33 281–2. In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 779:11–780:9 / LW 33 281–3.

[1518] Erasmus conflates Luke 10:25–8 and Matt 22:34–6; cf Mark 12:28–34.

[1519] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 785:26–7 / LW 33 292

of nature.[1520] And yet Christ was not in them, as he was not in the Pharisee skilled in the Law who tested Christ. But what point is there in speaking about the philosophers, since the wicked devils have such great powers of perception that they believe in such a way as to tremble?[1521] And certainly they have no share in anything beyond nature. I refuted the rest of the argument earlier.[1522] A person is not healthy simply because he is in some way not diseased. A physician is not superfluous simply because a person who has a fever does not have gout. And if free will has some power to welcome grace, that does not mean right away that he can give himself salvation. And a judge is not unjust if he condemns a parricide who had none the less not committed adultery. These are simply clouds of words. And the stars are not dark simply because the sun is the light of the world. Christ, who is never in error, is the only way to eternal happiness. He alone is the eternal truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.[1523] He alone is the only way by which the whole man achieves immortality.

Luther seems to me to have appended these things to make the book longer with such flourishes, since he hardly ever knows when to take pen from paper. For it is amazing how he plays the fool here by talking nonsense. 'Whoever believes in him will not be judged; whoever does not believe is already judged, because he does not believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.'[1524] 'If free will,' he says, 'is numbered among those who believe, it does not need Christ. If it is not, it is damned; if it is damned, it is therefore also wicked; if it is wicked, it can make no effort towards piety.'[1525] I will not examine here what he said before, that even a person who does not deserve it is damned, just as a person who does not deserve it is saved.[1526] But if wickedness is a perverted attitude towards God, just as piety is a religious attitude towards him, what will he say about infants who die without being regenerated by baptism? Certainly they do not have a perverted attitude, and yet they are damned.[1527]

* * * * *

[1520] Rom 1:19–20

[1521] James 2:19

[1522] See 658 above.

[1523] This formula derives from Augustine's *Enarrationes in psalmos* 88.2.6.45 CCSL 39 1238.

[1524] John 3:18

[1525] In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 780:10–26 / LW 33 283.

[1526] Cf *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 779:34–780:4 / LW 33 282–3.

[1527] The opinion propounded by Augustine; see, for example, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione, et de baptismo parvulorum* 1.16.21 PL 44 120. But he was also uneasy about it; see Ep 166.4.9–10 PL 33 724–5.

But, not to waste the reader's time with such subsidiary matters, in that passage John is not dealing with just any sort of disbelief[1528] but with belief in the Son of God. God did not blame free will for not being able to achieve that belief. For it is clear that there were many Jews who knew nothing of the Son of God, though they expected a certain Messiah to redeem the Jewish nation, and that there were even more who knew nothing of the Holy Spirit. In these matters belief is now required of us, for we are sufficiently convinced about them by Scripture, preaching, miracles, and the consensus of the whole world. In other matters people believe many things through free will: that God exists, that he is eternal, having no beginning or end, that he is beyond measure, incomprehensible, in control of all things, completely without parts or admixture, omnipotent, that nothing is or can be greater or better than he. Are such points not part of our belief? The gentiles believed that God punishes the wicked and rewards the pious. So much human reason could arrive at, but without grace it could not arrive at the mysteries of Christian belief. Therefore reason discerns, reason believes, the will makes some progress towards the highest good, but without grace it does not achieve eternal salvation, whether under paganism or Judaism or Christianity. And so what free will does is not nothing and grace is necessary.

He goes on:[1529] '"Every man is a liar," says Scripture.[1530] What does free will say? It says that Scripture is a liar. Indeed, man is not a liar in the best part of him, his reason and will, but only in his flesh and blood and marrow, so that everything that entitles him to be called human, namely his reason and will, is healthy and holy.' How much leisure he must have to fill pages with such rubbish! What is the meaning of 'Every man is a liar'? That everything a man encompasses by his natural powers is a lie? The notion is quite insane. What then? Namely this: only God cannot fail to keep his promises, but every man can fail because his will often changes and he often does not have the ability to live up to what he has undertaken to do. But when will he stop singing to us that old, shameless, lying tune of his that we make the whole human reason and will healthy and holy? Time and again *Discussion* says the opposite. But he thinks he is very witty, sporting such trifles as 'flesh and blood and marrow.' Splendid jests indeed to be written by a person who boasts he has the Spirit of Christ. But let us take leave of such buffoonery.

* * * * *

[1528] Basel 1527 has *incredulitate* 'disbelief'; LB has *credulitate* 'belief.'

[1529] In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 780:26–781:3 / LW 33 283–4.

[1530] Rom 3:4; Ps 155:11

Once more he sings the same old song he has sung so often about John 3[:27], 'A person cannot receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven.'[1531] 'You see that the power of free will is laid low. When John says "not anything," he excludes everything.' If Luther presses us with the unqualified meaning of the words, we also grant that a person has nothing which he has not received from God. But here the Baptist is not speaking about just any sort of thing but about the authority to baptize and forgive sins. For when Jesus began to baptize and preach the kingdom of God, as John had formerly done, the disciples of John, feeling a certain human affection for their teacher and not having a proper understanding of Jesus, reported to John, saying, 'Rabbi, the one who was with you on the other side of the Jordan, the one to whom you bore witness, see, he is baptizing and everyone is coming to him.'[1532] So too the Jews grumbled against John: 'Why, then, do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elias or a prophet?'[1533] And when they demanded to know by what authority Christ did these things, he shut them up with a question, asking them in turn whether the baptism of John was from heaven or from men.[1534] And so, since they were convinced that John had the authority to preach and baptize handed down to him from heaven but had their doubts about Jesus' power, John showed that the authority of Christ was far superior to his own, since Christ was the bridegroom and master and had descended from the bosom of the Father, while he himself was no more than an ordinary servant, 'unworthy to loosen the straps of his sandals.'[1535] And so Luther should remember what he taught us elsewhere, that language should be interpreted according to the point that is being made: that no one can receive the authority to baptize or forgive sins or to abrogate the Law or establish a new law or to lay down the dogmas of the faith and perform similar actions unless he has received it from God, and that this highest power was in Christ alone, in whose abundance everyone shares. John did not forgive sins, and he was not the founder of the kingdom of heaven but a herald only and a forerunner. And yet he did what he did with authority given from heaven. What does this have to do with the power of free will? Free will does not institute the sacraments of the church or establish articles of

* * * * *

[1531] In this and the following paragraph Erasmus is replying to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 781:4–14 / LW 33 284–5.

[1532] John 3:26

[1533] John 1:25

[1534] Matt 1:23–5

[1535] John 1:27

the faith or abrogate laws made by God – all of which was done by Christ, who was the only one who could do it.

And here once more he sets new limits to the discussion: 'We are disputing,' he says, 'not about nature but about grace; we are not asking about how we are on earth but about how we are in heaven in the sight of God.'[1536] What is this but melodramatic language signifying nothing? Isn't the heart of the question how important our natural powers are in accepting and retaining the grace of God? And hasn't *Discussion* always joined the action of free will with the working of grace? Luther ought to remember his own limits to the discussion, since at one time he taught us the absolute necessity of all things. And yet here he speaks as follows: 'For we know that man has been established as lord over creatures lower than he, and in relation to them he has rights and free will, so that they obey him and do what he wills and thinks.'[1537] I will not take up the point that here he turns free will into a right, though it is one thing to will, another to have a right. And then he connects the outcome with free will. But if he means what he says, horses, bears, lions, and elephants do not always do what we want, and so even in this area free will is eliminated. 'But we are asking whether man has free will in relation to God, so that he obeys and does what man wills, or rather, whether God has free will in relation to man, so that he wills and does what God wills and cannot do anything except what God wills and does.'[1538] This is what he says. Who does not know that by his absolute power there is nothing God cannot do and that mankind is totally subject to his will so that he can change it from mankind into nothing? But according to his ordained power a person frequently does what God does not will, and in a certain sense God is forced by man to do what he does not will.[1539] He does not will the death of a sinner,[1540] and yet when a sinner scorns all measures and does not will to repent, God is forced to destroy someone he willed to live. And God wills that all should be saved,[1541] and yet contrary to that will very many perish through their own vice. Finally, in matters where God has bound himself by giving us his word, he does what we[1542] will, as, for example, in the sacraments of the church when a wicked

* * * * *

[1536] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 781:6–8 / LW 33 284–5

[1537] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 781:8–10 / LW 33 285. See n605 above.

[1538] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 781:10–13 / LW 33 285

[1539] On God's absolute and ordained power see *A Discussion* CWE 76 50–1 n227.

[1540] Cf Ezek 33:11.

[1541] 1 Tim 2:4

[1542] *Nos* 'we' is the reading of Basel 1527, where LB has *non* 'not.'

minister turns the bread and wine into his body and blood and does so in a sense against God's will and desire. Now, if Luther is talking about both good and evil men, what is the meaning of those words 'except what God wills and does'? But plenty has been said about these matters elsewhere. Here is his conclusion: man cannot do any of the sort of things Christ did, forgiving sin through baptism, laying down new doctrines, abrogating the Law, establishing a new testament, unless he has power given to him from above; therefore free will does not exist!

There follows in the same section: '"He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and he speaks of the earth; he who comes from heaven is above everyone."[1543] Free will does not come from heaven; therefore it is earth and savours of nothing but the earthly. And he who speaks of the earth speaks wicked things.'[1544] This is the way he distorts Scripture! In fact, John is here talking about himself, showing how far removed his teaching is from the heavenly teaching of Christ, who alone came down from heaven. And so because of his lowly status he calls himself earth and says that he speaks earthly things by comparison with the sublime teachings that would be preached by Christ, who came from the bosom of the Father. For the rest, did John speak wicked things? I think not, but rather lowly things compared to the teaching of Christ. And what he quotes from John 8[:23] has no relevance here: 'You are of the world; I am not of the world; you are from below; I am from above.' To whom was Christ speaking here? To the wicked and stubborn Jews, concerning whom he testified: 'You will die in your sins,' and a little later, 'I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.'[1545] 'But those to whom he was speaking,' Luther says, 'had free wills, and yet he says they are of the world.'[1546] What's this I hear? Did *Discussion* say free will is from heaven, that is, that it savours of nothing except the heavenly? What he adds is just as crazy: 'What news would it be if he said they are of the world according to their flesh and gross passions? Didn't the whole world already know that? Then what need was there to say that mankind is of the world in that element it shares with the brute beasts, since the beasts are also of the world in this respect?'[1547] I ask you, my

* * * * *

[1543] John 3:31

[1544] Erasmus partially quotes, partially paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 781:15–19 / LW 33 285.

[1545] John 8:21, 24, 38

[1546] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 781:23–5 / LW 33 285

[1547] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 781:25–8 / LW 33 285

dear reader, don't such statements seem like visions seen in a fever or in dreams? Who ever said that the human reason and will are totally healthy and holy?

He repeats that text from John, chapter 6[:44]: 'No one comes to me unless my Father draws him.'[1548] Here Luther gives the same interpretation as the Manichaeans,[1549] as Chrysostom indicates;[1550] for they used these words of the Gospel to teach that mankind can do nothing at all on its own. But if Manichaeus understood the Gospel of John better than the orthodox Fathers, let us follow him and be called Manichaeans instead of Christians. In that passage the Lord uttered sublime teachings about himself, teachings beyond the capacity of the human intellect: 'I am the living bread who has come down from heaven,' and 'that whoever sees the Son and believes in him has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.'[1551] These are not the words of a man, but rather they bear the stamp of divinity. But they saw a human body; they heard a human voice; they knew his humble parents and lowly relatives. So to the Jews this utterance of the Lord seemed not only incredible but also blasphemous and wicked, and not only to the mob but also to the disciples themselves, so much so that some of them abandoned their teacher.[1552] And so when the Jews grumbled, the Lord answered them: 'No one comes to me unless the Father draws him,' that is, no one believes in the divinity of the Son unless it is revealed to him by the Father, for it is beyond human capacity. It is clear on the face of it that that is what John meant. Now see how Luther reasons: 'Free will by its natural power cannot believe that a man born of man can be God born of God; therefore it sees nothing at all and cannot assent to these words unless it is drawn by heaven; therefore it cannot assent to any truth!'[1553] First, he grants us, I think, that the word 'draw' here refers not to violence but rather to inviting and alluring. And we grant that the belief by which we are cleansed of sin is a gift of God, and a free gift. But this gift is not given to anyone who does not want it. The gift is offered, however, to everyone. The reason why it is not accepted by everyone is the free human will. In

* * * * *

[1548] In this paragraph Erasmus is replying to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 781:29–36 / LW 33 285–6.

[1549] On the Manichaeans see *A Discussion* CWE 76 15 and n46, 16 and n49; *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 245 and n812. On John 6:44 see also *A Discussion* CWE 76 66–7.

[1550] *In Ioannem homiliae* 46 (45).1 PG 59 257–8

[1551] John 6:51, 40

[1552] John 6:67

[1553] Erasmus paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 781:30–6 / LW 33 285–6.

the same passage we read: 'Everything the Father gives me comes to me; and I will not cast away anyone who comes to me.' And in another place, the Lord invites everyone, saying, 'Come to me, all who are distressed and burdened.'[1554] If a person comes to Christ, what need is there for him to be drawn? If he is drawn, how can he be said to come? And so the language of Christ mingles heavenly grace with the human will, for a person is at once drawn by the invitation of heaven, and he comes through the effort of free will. This is what Chrysostom has to say: 'But this does not eliminate our choice; rather it shows that divine assistance is necessary and that we do not come unwillingly but making every effort and struggling to do so.'[1555] These are the word spoken by that mouth of gold.[1556] And Luther cannot stand that word 'effort' in my writings. But here there is reason to fear that Chrysostom will come off no better than Jerome.

He rejects what *Discussion* cited from Augustine, that a person is drawn not as if he were tied to a chain but as a sheep is drawn when it is shown a branch.[1557] He says that what Augustine wrote applies only to the pious, who are already sheep and are led by the Spirit of God wherever God wills. This answer cannot be more expeditiously disposed of than by saying it is false. For in that passage Augustine is not talking about those justified by the Spirit of God but rather about those who need to be justified. Not everyone is a sheep of Christ and follows the Spirit, but there are sheep who have wandered off; there are those who live and die having a

* * * * *

[1554] John 6:37; Matt 11:28

[1555] *In Ioannem homiliae* 46 (45).1 PG 59 258. The sentence Erasmus seems to be translating and adapting is as follows: Ὃ *καὶ αὐτὸ οὐ τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἀναιρεῖ, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἐμφαίνει ἡμᾶς βοηθείας δεομένους, ὅτι δείκνυσιν ἐνταῦθα, οὐ τὸν τυχόντα ἐρχόμενον, ἀλλὰ τὸν πολλῆς ἀπολαύοντα συμμαχίας*. A modern translation (and the Latin in PG) take the final clause to mean: 'He here was pointing out that it is not anyone who happens to do so that comes to him, but that it is a person enjoying the benefit of much assistance who comes'; see *St John Chrysostom, Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist* trans Sr Thomas Aquinas Goggin SCH, 2 vols (Washington, DC 1957; repr 1969) 463. But Erasmus appears to take *συμμαχίας* not in the usual sense of 'alliance, assistance,' but in a more etymological sense of 'a fighting or struggling along with.' In other words he refers it (as the context and the cognate verb *συμμαχέω* might well suggest) to man's alliance with God rather than God's with man. But Erasmus' paraphrase is strained and omits *ἀπολαύοντα*. Perhaps he was translating from memory.

[1556] See n780 above.

[1557] In this paragraph Erasmus is replying to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 781:36–782:11 / LW 33 286.

wolf for a shepherd. For these are the words of Augustine: 'Are you not drawn? Pray that you may be drawn.'[1558] If Luther attaches any importance to Augustine, who prays that he may be drawn, isn't Augustine making an effort to accept belief which he has not yet accepted? The gift of a ruler does not cease to be gratuitous if someone strives to get it through the help of friends. And the Lord says: 'Whoever comes to me, I will not shut him out.'[1559] The journey to Christ is by faith; but 'faith comes from hearing.'[1560] But not everyone who hears believes. For the outer word is spoken in vain unless grace draws from within, but no one is drawn by grace unless he makes himself available to it.

He strings together another syllogism. 'John,' he points out, 'says:[1561] "The Spirit will convict the world of sin, because they did not believe in me."[1562] Here you see that not to believe in Christ is called a sin. But this sin surely does not reside in the skin or hair but in reason itself and in the will. But the whole world is convicted of disbelief, and that sin was unknown to the world until the Spirit revealed it by convicting the world. Free will is also in the world, together with its reason and will; therefore it is guilty and damned, however great it may be.'[1563] My lord! what an intricate argument we have here, what distortion of Scripture to reverse its meaning! For that passage does not deal with free will but rather with the inexcusable stubbornness of the Jews, who might have had some sort of pretext to justify their refusal to believe in Christ's divinity because the weakness of his human body kept them from perceiving it. But because, after the Spirit was sent forth, they saw even greater miracles performed by the apostles in the name of the crucified than he had performed when he was alive but nevertheless persisted in their disbelief, they had no pretext by which they could excuse their sin. Furthermore, as to what Luther says about the whole world being guilty of the sin of disbelief and not even knowing it was a sin, I think their ignorance of the faith, which is what John is talking about here, was not considered blameworthy in the Jews before the preaching of the gospel, or even in the early days of the dawning gospel, when the apostles called Christ a just man chosen by God, remaining silent about his divine

* * * * *

[1558] *In Ioannis evangelium tractatus 124* 26.2.9 CCSL 36 260

[1559] John 6:37

[1560] Rom 10:17

[1561] The Froben 1527 edition reads *dicit, inquit* 'he points out, says'; LB has *dicit, inquit, XVI* 'he points out, says [in chapter] 16.'

[1562] John 16:8

[1563] Erasmus closely paraphrases *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 782:12–21 / LW 33 286.

nature. Nor was belief in the mystery of the Trinity required from mankind before it was divinely revealed by the coming of the Son of God. On that count, then, there was not guilt on the part of free will – which at that time, as he says, was in the world (although elsewhere he denies it exists in the real world); otherwise all the Jews, however righteous, would have been lost, except for a few to whom this mystery had perhaps been made known by a special revelation. But if he contends that free will cannot believe anything by its own natural power, he is clearly contradicting Paul. I think I have already said enough on this point. But let us also grant that it cannot merit the gift of faith by its own power; it certainly can make itself available to impelling grace or it can also turn away from it and do other things which we have already mentioned time after time. For free will does not generate grace, but it is renewed by grace operating in a person in such a way that the human will itself also acts together with it, both in taking hold of it and keeping it and acting with it, and likewise in rejecting, lessening, and losing it.

He adds a hyperbole: 'In Holy Scripture Christ is always named as the antithesis of his opposites, so that wherever Christ is not, there are Satan, error, wickedness, darkness, sin, death, the wrath of God, hell, and what not. But since the whole of Scripture speaks about Christ, it is totally opposed to free will.' But that is not putting it strongly enough. 'Each jot and tiniest tittle,' as he says, 'lays free will low.'[1564] O powerful hyperboles! but nothing more than hyperboles. The nation of the Jews expected the Christ, but most of them did not know what he would be like. For they expected a very strong king who would redeem the people of Israel from servitude to the gentiles and would transfer dominion over the whole world to the Jews. Yet this elementary and crude faith was sufficient for salvation. Consequently, it is probable that before the Law to believe in one God was sufficient for salvation. But if we require from the Jews of the early periods the same understanding of the Son as the church requires from us, we will require of them an understanding of the Holy Spirit as well. But if they are not blameworthy for not knowing the Holy Spirit, neither are the gentiles for not knowing the Son; from the created world they could somehow apprehend the nature of God, but they had no means of apprehending the Son of God. Therefore Luther's assumption that wherever Christ was unknown, there was Satan, wickedness, and death is false. We grant that at the present time there is no salvation apart from the knowledge of Christ, now that the light of the gospel flashes its ray throughout the whole world.

* * * * *

[1564] In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 782:21–30 / LW 33 287.

[*The kingdoms of Christ and of Satan: the conflict between spirit and flesh*]
We also profess that, as Luther says, there are two kingdoms, that of Christ and that of Satan, from which Christ snatches his own through the assistance of grace.[1565] But we posit the kingdom of Christ in the perfect; the kingdom of Satan, in the perverted; in between are infants and weak Christians. That sudden rapture of his happened to some when the Spirit performed miracles and taught in various languages. But we come off well enough now if Christ grows gradually in us. But though we are perfectly willing to grant those two kingdoms and that rapture, still, because no one is seized against his will, free will is not totally eliminated.

He returns here to that Achillean argument[1566] from Romans 7[:14–25] and Galatians 5[:16–24] concerning the fight between the spirit and the flesh.[1567] More than once he reproaches *Discussion* for leaving it untouched, as if *Discussion* had undertaken the task of responding to his *Assertion*, even though she specifically points out that she is concerned with absolute necessity. But in fact she does not leave it entirely untouched, if a person reads my *Discussion*. But let us see what this Achilles has to contribute. 'Even in the righteous the flesh fights against the spirit and the spirit in turn against the flesh.' And he will not allow us to take the flesh as referring only to the grosser passions, since among the works of the flesh Paul mentions heresy, idolatry, quarrels, strife,[1568] which clearly spring from those highest powers, reason and will. And so this is how he argues: 'If human nature is so bad that even in those who have been reborn in the spirit it does not strive towards the good but even fights against and opposes the good, how should it strive towards the good in those who have not been renewed but are in the old man and serve in bondage to Satan?' What point has Achilles won here? That in the reason and the will there are also wicked impulses and perverse judgments? Didn't *Discussion* frankly admit this? In fact, though, even these impulses have their origin in those grosser passions, which cause us to love what is seen more than what is unseen. For by the flesh I do not mean only debauchery and lust, although in one place Jerome interprets so.[1569] Greed is a gross matter; often enough it gives rise to envy. Lust is a gross affair; it frequently gives rise to deadly anger. Debauchery is a gross

* * * * *

[1565] In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 782:30–783:2 / LW 33 287–8.

[1566] Cf *Adagia* I vii 41 (at the end).

[1567] In this and the following four paragraphs Erasmus gives a lengthy reply to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 783:3–12 / LW 33 288.

[1568] Gal 5:20

[1569] *Commentarii in epistolam ad Galatas* 3.6.19–21 PL 26 413–15 business; not infrequently it leads to slander. And so it is true that in the reason and will of wicked persons these detestable vices reign. But in what parts of a person do these fruits reign: 'charity, joy, peace, patience,' and so forth?[1570] Isn't it in the same parts? 'They reign,' he will say, 'but by the gift of the Holy Spirit; but those reign from the viciousness of nature.' Accordingly, since nature is common to all, there reigns in everyone without exception 'fornication, impurity, lewdness, lust, slavery to idols, poisonings, aggression, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrelling, dissension, factions, envy, murder, drunkenness, revelling, and similar vices.'[1571] These drives are not felt by all who have been reborn in Christ, as they would if they had their source in nature, which is common to all; rather for the most part they arise from a vicious education, from free will turning to what is worse, rather than from nature. But if you look at nature in and of itself, just as it has an inclination to vice, so too it contains seeds of great virtue. But if the flesh wars also in the pious, then every single one of them ought to have all these urges. Though we grant that they come off from the battle victorious, what shall we say about the perfect? We grant that no mortal in this life has made such progress that he feels not the slightest itching of sinful emotion, but I certainly think there are many who do not feel any urge to commit murder or to poison someone. Why, then, does Paul mention these things? Because he is writing to persons many of whom were weak and not yet cleansed of the habits of their former lives, as was also true of the Corinthians. He urges them to make progress in Christian living and also, just as they had departed from the beliefs of the pagans, to withdraw from their morals, which he summarizes here, not because many of them committed such sins but because their Christianity was weak, so that the habits of their former life tempted them to vices only recently abandoned. Accordingly, the vices that Paul lists here do not apply so much to human nature as to minds depraved by vicious living; in them the flesh longs for the horrible vices reported by the Apostle.

But if free will is condemned so thoroughly because it has within itself an inclination to such vices, let it be praised because it has the seeds of virtue and an inborn horror of such vices, which cannot be shaken off by a habit of sinning, no more than humanity itself can be shaken off. The Pelagians denied that there is such a thing as original sin, and their opinion was rightly condemned.[1572] But those who place such enormous emphasis on original sin come close to the far more dangerous error of Manichaeus,[1573] and they give an opportunity to the flagrantly vicious to excuse their sins and blame them on nature. Among the pagans there is also a battle between reason and the emotions, which Paul calls the flesh. But if heresies, envy, and such sins are in the reason and will, as Luther teaches, the highest part of the mind is in a conflict with itself, while the will is balanced, as it were, between them, inclining now to one side, now to the other. So too in those faculties there is both spirit and flesh. For here 'spirit' does not signify the Holy Spirit but a human mind prepared by the gift of the Spirit to struggle against the flesh. And just as those who lack the Spirit often conquer by free will the passion which tempts them to sin – as, for example, many who lack grace are addicted to prostitutes but still win out over anger which tempts them to commit murder, not out of fear of God or of punishment but only out of a natural horror of such a nefarious crime – so too those who are led by the Spirit conquer such passions much more easily by their free will, which somehow works together with the Spirit. Hence this passage does more to support free will than to eliminate it. But Luther's exaggeration of the power of the flesh even in the pious, just as it comes close to the error of the Manichaeans, so too it diverges from what Paul says shortly thereafter: 'But those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh, together with its vices and passions.'[1574] Certainly those who have the Spirit of Christ belong to Christ. How, then, does flesh do battle if it is crucified and dead, together with its vices and passions? I say this not because I am unaware that in holy persons there is a continual mortification of the flesh as long as they reside in the dwelling of our earthly body but rather in order to refute Luther's exaggerations, which attribute too much to the flesh and Satan, just as they overemphasize original sin, to avoid attributing anything to free will. So much for this passage in the Epistle to the Galatians.

[1570] Erasmus is referring to the twelve gifts of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22–3).
[1571] Gal 5:20–1; Erasmus is imagining (accurately enough) how Luther would reply.
[1572] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 23 and n78, 27 and n101; *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 210 and n624.

Chapter 7[:14–25] of Romans, however, is a long and difficult discussion. I will preface my remarks on it by noting that there Paul is not talking about himself but in his own person speaks of someone who has been conquered by his passions and is enslaved to sin. For when the Apostle made these statements he was not dead by means of the Law, nor was the commandment devised to put him to death, since he observed the Law very fully, nor was he sold into slavery to sin, nor did he do the evil he did not want to do, nor was he so unhappy that he wanted to be freed from this mortal body, which forced him to do what he did not want to do; rather

* * * * *

[1573] See n1549 above.

[1574] Gal 5:24

he took this role upon himself as a teacher, so that he could show that no one can be free from sin except by the grace of the gospel. I am not unaware, however, of how mightily St Augustine struggles, in the first book he addressed to Boniface, to make this whole passage fit Paul; but he distorts much of it so radically that the more zealously he tries to persuade me the less I agree with him.[1575] Another prefatory remark: almost all the ancient Fathers do not interpret this passage as referring to original sin, but rather to a habit of sinning that corrupts both human reason and will. Or if they apply some text in it to original sin, certainly they apply most of the passage to vicious habits.[1576]

With this in mind, let us see how this passage undermines free will. Certainly the sinner, who both lacks the Spirit of God and has been sold into slavery to sin – for that is the character Paul takes upon himself, so as to give less offence to the Jews – does not do the good which he wills but the evil which he hates. How does he will the good? Because he delights in the Law and assents to it, perceiving through his natural judgment that it is just and good. For the Law says: 'You shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbour, you shall not commit adultery.'[1577] The sinner sees that what is commanded by the Law is just, being aware that it is unjust to do to another what he would not wish to be done to him, and by a certain natural inclination he is driven to what is good, but overcome by passion he does what according to natural reason he does not will but rather hates and detests. The fact that his conscience protests against the sin he commits is evidence that the Law is good. But if a sinner who has not yet become inhuman should do something right, he feels a certain mental pleasure, and this also argues that the Law is good. But when Paul adds 'according to the inner man,'[1578] that cannot be taken to refer to the Spirit, since Paul is playing the role of someone who has not yet received the Spirit. Rather by the inner man he designates natural reason, to which the will is joined, though the will can turn either way. For what he here calls the inner man he shortly calls the mind: 'I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind,' and a bit later: 'As one and the same person I serve the law of God in my mind, but in my flesh I serve the law of sin.'[1579] He says this about a Jew who is fleshly and lacks the Spirit of God. When he says, then, 'Now it is not I who do that deed but the sin that resides in me,'[1580] what does he mean by 'it is not I who do that deed'? It is not I in so far as I am a human being possessing reason. For it is characteristic of a human being to live by the commands of reason; of brutes, to be led by emotional drives. What does he mean by 'the sin which resides in me'? Clearly the habit of sin that has somehow become a second nature and has fixed its seat in the mind so that it scorns reason and drags the will along willy-nilly; for the will assents when it listens to reason, and when it gives itself over to passions it does not assent. This what the Apostle means by 'To will is ready at hand, but I find no way to carry it out.'[1581] Even a person corrupted by a habit of sin is sometimes horrified by his baseness and is goaded towards virtue by his reason; but his will, depraved by familiarity with sin, is overcome, and the person does what he does not will and abstains from what he does will. And this is 'the law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind.' Sin has acquired a right by the habit of sinning. But this right springs not so much from nature as from depraved morals. Otherwise, when Paul says 'Now it is not I who do this deed but the sin that resides in me,' if you apply that to nature, the language will smack of the Manichaeans' opinion, and nothing could be more detestable than that. And so this whole passage supports the opinion of *Discussion*, who attributes to mankind the seeds of what is right and a natural pressure to do what is virtuous, though that instinct is ineffective apart from grace.

[1575] *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* (addressed to Pope Boniface I) 1.8.14–1.11.24 CSEL 60 435–44. In *Annotations on Romans* 7:25 Erasmus reacts in the same way to Augustine's interpretation and argues for Origen's view that Paul here speaks under the persona of someone else (CWE 56 195–8).

[1576] Cf *Annotations on Romans* (on Rom 7:14–25) CWE 56 192–8.

[1577] Exod 20:14–16

[1578] Rom 7:22

That Paul is here speaking in the persona of someone else is clear from what follows, where he speaks once more in his own person: 'Now, therefore, there is no damnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh. For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me from the law of sin and death.'[1582] But if 'there is no damnation for those who are in Christ,' what grounds can Luther have for saying that every righteous person sins mortally in his works, however good they may be, and that Satan reigns in the righteous under the reign of the Spirit because of the flesh, which he interprets as meaning the vitiated nature of mankind? And since 'those who belong to Christ,' as I said, 'have their flesh crucified,

* * * * *

[1579] Rom 7:23, 25
[1580] Rom 7:20
[1581] Rom 7:18
[1582] Rom 8:1–2

together with its vices and passions,'[1583] should this dead flesh still have so much power that in the deeds which the Spirit works in the righteous it commingles sin deserving of hell? I am very much opposed to this overemphasis on original sin, mitigating as it does the sins of mankind and agreeing with the teachings of the Manichaeans.[1584] Manichaeus teaches that only a single part of a person is irreparably vitiated, namely the flesh. Luther makes the whole person vitiated, so that not even the Spirit performs a good work in him. But the ancient Fathers interpreted this passage and ones like it, where Paul discusses the death that is transmitted to all because of the sin of one person, as referring to the sin by which we imitate Adam,[1585] and it seems to me that all the elements fit this meaning better, since Luther's twisted meaning is not even self-consistent. But if he scorns Chrysostom, Ambrose, and the person whose commentaries on all of Paul's epistles have come down to us under the name of Jerome – whosever they are, they are learned[1586] – let him imagine that I proposed this interpretation from the context itself. His Achilles has been repelled and free will defended – which is what he demanded.

Now he gives two reasons why he does not wish to have the gift of a free will that can endeavour to do something towards salvation: first, because he could not hold up amid so many assaults of demons and dangers; second, because he would always have a restless conscience, always in doubt whether any work he performed was pleasing to God.[1587] As it is, since God has placed salvation outside the power of free will and taken it to himself, and since God promised he would save Luther not by Luther's efforts or progress but by his own mercy and grace, he lives in confidence and certitude because the one who promised is trustworthy and also so powerful that no force of demons or adversities can snatch from Christ what he has claimed for himself. 'No one,' he says, 'will snatch them from me, because the Father, who gave them to me, is more powerful than anyone.'[1588] Thus it happens that at least some are saved, whereas all would perish if the matter depended on the power of free will. As it is, they are confident because, even if they sin, Christ will not blame them for their offences but will either pardon them or correct them. This is pretty much the opinion of Luther, who adds that he is talking about what he learned from long experience. What was the former condition of his conscience, what it is now, it is his business to see to it; it is not my part to examine it. But we are not inquiring here about what he judges to be more advantageous to himself but rather what was the will of God; and it could happen that a person might be free from worry about his conscience and still not be very safe. But in fact, who can be sure about his conscience when it is uncertain whether he is numbered among those God selected to be saved, even though they do not deserve it? For even if he is certain about grace, he is not certain about whether God will take grace away. But he does take it away, as Luther himself taught, not from those who have offended but from whomever he wishes, so that it is not in man's power either to reject or retain grace. Now if he had promised eternal life to those who believe in him and had added nothing further, a person could flatter himself by believing he has a suitable faith; whether anyone can know that for sure, I do not know. As it is, since good works are required so often and since Paul says, concerning evil works, 'Whoever does such things will not possess the kingdom of God,'[1589] I am afraid that those who believe in God's promises in this way might be deceiving themselves. God is merciful; he forgives sins, but he does so only for the repentant, for those who counterbalance their malefactions with good deeds. But if it makes no difference what our works are like, as long as we have some sort of faith, why was it said that 'giving alms extinguishes sin as water does fire'?[1590] Why do we say in the Lord's Prayer, 'Forgive us our offences as we forgive those who offend against us'?[1591] David sings to the Lord not only of his mercy but also of his judgment. What does Luther mean when he says that a person is unequal to demons and to dangers if he tries to do anything through free will? Has anyone ever taught that a person can hold up against the assaults of wicked spirits defended only by free will? But they add grace to free will, which is inadequate in itself. 'One demon is stronger than all mankind put together.'[1592] But a demon is not allowed to do whatever he likes, not even against the wicked. And God, who aids and strengthens free will,

---

[1583] Gal 5:24

[1584] See n1549 above.

[1585] See Erasmus' lengthy annotation on Rom 5:12 (CWE 56 139–61) and his paraphrase of the same text (CWE 42 34 and 147 nn12, 14–15).

[1586] See Erasmus' annotations on Rom 7:14–25 (CWE 56 192–8, especially 195 n4 and 198 n17) and his paraphrase of the same passage (CWE 42 43–5 and 159 n8).

[1587] In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 783:17–39 / LW 33 288–9.

[1588] John 10:28–9; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 783:33–4 / LW 33 289

* * * * *

[1589] Gal 5:21

[1590] Ecclus 3:33

[1591] Matt 6:12

[1592] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 783:21 / LW 33 289

is stronger all by himself than all the demons. If Luther should say, 'What need is there for free will, since grace is sufficient?' it was for our own good, it was God's pleasure that we have it, just as I showed in *Discussion*,[1593] and I will say something more about this at the conclusion of this volume.

[*God's justice and mercy seen through nature, grace, and glory*]

After this he makes a long digression on a commonplace theme, declaring that man is nothing compared to God, and he complains that 'though we grant, as nature teaches, that human power, strength, wisdom, knowledge, substance, and everything we have is absolutely nothing by comparison with God's power, strength, wisdom, knowledge, substance, still we are so perverse as to assail only God's justice and judgment and claim so much for our judgment as to want to comprehend, judge, and evaluate God's judgment,' and so on with other disquisitions on this point that in my opinion have nothing to do with the matter.[1594] For if he is talking about God himself, some have discussed his substance, as the theologians do. Some have lifted up their faces against God's strength, and do so even now, like the person of whom Paul says, 'He lifts himself up above every object of worship and all that is called god,'[1595] but the pious also discuss the same points. Thus the wicked grumble against the judgment and justice of God, but the pious discuss the same things in so far as it is right to do so. And just as it is not impious to investigate the power, wisdom, and goodness of God from created things and Holy Scripture, so too it is not wicked to investigate the justice of God from the same sources; and those who do so do not place their judgment above God's judgment, just as they do not place their wisdom above his. We grant that he is incomprehensible in every respect, except in so far as he has willed to become known to us. And, to twit Luther's inconsistency in passing, even though he has said so often that all the power of free will is mere blindness and the most profound darkness, still he grants here that a great deal of knowledge about God is grasped by our natural powers and human reason. Why should we not investigate God's justice using Holy Scripture, since he himself in the prophets so often challenges his people to pass judgment, as if he were prepared to risk that they could show him to be in some ways too little mindful of what is fair and just? But I have said something about this matter before.[1596]

* * * * *

[1593] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 72–4, 87–8.

[1594] In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 784:1–34 / LW 33 289–90.

[1595] 2 Thess 2:4

[1596] See 505 above.

He goes on to declare that even in external affairs the world is governed by God in such a way that human reason is forced either to believe that there is no God or to believe that he is unjust or unaware of human conditions,[1597] and as evidence he quotes the jesting verse of the lover: 'I am often tempted to think there are no gods.'[1598] He quotes the well known proverb: 'The worse someone is, the luckier he is.'[1599] He brings in Epicurus and Pliny, who thought that there is no divine providence but that everything happens by chance.[1600] He brings in Aristotle, who said that the highest being is happy in contemplating only itself and would be miserable if it saw so much injustice and suffering.[1601] He brings in Job, together with the prophets, who were tempted to doubt the justice of God. But what is the point of all this? To show that God's justice is nowhere apparent but must only be taken on faith? How do we believe that God exists? Isn't it through faith? And yet the gentiles also perceived from created things that God exists, and they said he is the best and the greatest. Someone cannot be the best if he is unjust. Faith does not preclude all natural knowledge but rather perfects it. But if they perceived God's justice, telling of how confessions are extracted in the underworld, where the pious are rewarded and the wicked tormented, why will Luther not allow that persons who have the Spirit from heaven should speak of God's justice? I do not know how Demosthenes felt.[1602] What Cicero felt is apparent from that fragment of the letter he wrote to Octavius when he was apparently determined to die, threatening that he would go to the most holy souls of the Brutuses, the Decii, and the Catos and report to them the sufferings of the republic.[1603] He knew, therefore, that the souls of the good survive death and he contemplated that he would journey to the rest they enjoy. And Socrates, when he was about to die from drinking hemlock,

* * * * *

[1597] In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 784:35–785:12 / LW 33 291.

[1598] Ovid *Amores* 3.9.36

[1599] *Proverbia sententiaeque Latinitatis medii aevii* ed Hans Walther, 6 vols (Göttingen 1963–9) no 25698b

[1600] Pliny *Naturalis historia* 2.5.14–27; for Epicurus' views about the gods see Diogenes Laertius *Vitae philosophorum* 10.81, 97, 122–4 and Lucretius *De rerum natura* 1.44–9; 2.1058–63 and 1090–1104, 5.110–234.

[1601] Aristotle *Metaphysics* 12.9 1074b15–1075a11

[1602] Demosthenes committed suicide by taking poison when the Greek revolt against Macedon failed; see Plutarch *Demosthenes* 29–30.

[1603] Pseudo-Cicero to Octavianus in *The Correspondence of M. Tullius Cicero* ed Robert Y. Tyrrell and Louis C. Purser, 7 vols (London and Dublin 1899–1918) 6.290. Cicero was brutally murdered at the command of Caesar and Anthony; see Plutarch *Cicero* 47–8.

did not complain about the injustice of the gods, but he congratulated himself that at the behest of God he would journey to Aristides, Phocion, and the other most praiseworthy men who were leading a happy life after being released from their bodies.[1604] And Cato of Utica, when he saw that the victory would fall to Julius Caesar, did not condemn the gods for injustice, but he said that in the affairs of the gods there is an impenetrable darkness.[1605] We say the same thing whenever we cannot make out why God does something that seems to us to be unjust. But if we think that this whole discussion is resolved simply because we are convinced that, though the wicked flourish here in bodily comforts, they lose their souls, and that there is life after this life in which no good deed remains unrewarded and no evil deed unpunished, both of these points were known to the gentiles. The Stoics proclaimed that anyone who lacks the habit[1606] of virtue is miserable even though he prospers to the height of human capacity in power, wealth, ancestral masks, beauty, age, health, strength, intelligence, eloquence and that, on the other hand, a wise man, even though overwhelmed by every sort of misfortune and bodily disaster, is nevertheless happy. Though it is clear that this is true, nevertheless Luther says it cannot be grasped by human reason. What then? Am I making the gentiles equal to Christians? By no means. But what only a few understood or rather thought to be true is now most firmly grasped through faith by children, the uneducated, and mere women, so much so that they would sooner face death than have this belief of theirs torn from them. It is not relevant to the present discussion to deal with the case of Aristotle; nevertheless Aristotle did not deny that the gods abstain from governing the world so as not to grow miserable from seeing so much injustice and suffering, but he also thought that, once the governance of the world had been set up, there was no need for them to be concerned about it. And yet, because he reasoned that nothing could be happy if it had nothing to do, he concluded that they are happy in contemplating themselves.[1607] We say the same thing about the true God, who is none the less happy as he knows, provides for, and governs all things.

* * * * *

[1604] Cf Plato *Apology* 40c5–41c5. Socrates does not mention Aristides or Phocion.

[1605] The closest I can come to this is a speech placed in the mouth of Cato by Seneca (*Epistulae morales* 71.14–16) in which he emphasized the composure of the gods and our ignorance of the flux and reflux of human affairs.

[1606] Latin *habitu*, equivalent of the Greek technical term ἕξις, a perfected state or condition; cf n214 above.

[1607] See n1601 above.

Now just as if he had persuaded us that God's justice cannot be grasped in any way, neither by the pagans through their natural powers nor by the pious through the gift of grace, he presents us with a scholastic distinction of which, contrary to his usual manner, he approves, placing before our eyes the three lights of nature, grace, and glory.[1608] 'According to the first light it is incomprehensible how a good person is afflicted and an evil person thrives.'[1609] I have shown that this is not incomprehensible, since the Stoics deny that happiness depends on such matters and the poets also teach that after this life rewards and punishments are laid up for the pious and the wicked. But how God saves someone who does not deserve it and damns someone who does not deserve it – which is certainly true in the case of unbaptized infants – I do not think can be understood satisfactorily by natural reason, since, if we are to believe Luther, not even the leading teachers of the church up till now have been able to understand why God damns an adult who does not deserve it; I leave infants out of the question because I think it is best to leave them to the judgment of God. But if this is easily perceived by the light of grace, either all the Doctors in the past have lacked this light or they held something different from what they wrote. If that is conceded, then they deceived the people entrusted to them. I do not think that even in the light of glory it will be clear that God casts someone who does not deserve it into eternal fire. Once more, let him look to his consistency: earlier he said that free will, however great it may be, is nothing but absolute darkness; here he grants to it a light by which it perceives something without knowing or loving Christ. If he should say 'only about human matters, nothing about the divine,' I have already shown that much can be perceived by the light of nature both about the divine and about virtue. But how will we see by the light of glory that God punishes the undeserving – which we certainly cannot perceive by the light of grace – since the light of Scripture teaches that no one perishes except willingly and by his own fault and since the impious, on their way to destruction, are reproached because they refused to hear the one who was calling to them,

* * * * *

[1608] In this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 785:12–38 / LW 33 291–2. Luther claims that the affliction of the good and prosperity of the wicked cannot be understood by natural reason but only by the light of grace, which reveals punishments and rewards in the afterlife. Erasmus denies this, pointing out that even natural reason has perceived such rewards and punishments. According to Luther, the light of grace cannot explain how a person can be damned through no fault of his own, but the light of glory will explain this too.

[1609] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 785:28–9 / LW 33 292

because they rejected salvation?[1610] However great the light of glory may be, it does not conflict with the light of Scripture.

[*On Luther's epilogue*]
All that remains is the epilogue of this Lutherly disputation, the first article of which is this: 'For if we believe,' he says, 'it is true that God foreknows and preordains all things and that his foreknowledge and predestination cannot be either mistaken or hindered, free will has no existence.'[1611] To this I have replied that free will is no more hindered by the foreknowledge of God than it is by the knowledge or foreknowledge of men. I have shown that not even the will of God takes away free will, since those things which depend on the mutable human will are willed by him contingently, so that his foreknowledge cannot be mistaken (since he foresees whatever way the human will will turn, to one side or the other) and his will is not hindered (since if a person turns to one alternative through free will, God would have willed the very choice which the person made). God permits, however, rather than wills, evil deeds, and I have already distinguished his signified will from his conditional will.[1612]

The second article is this: 'If we believe that Satan is the prince of this world lying in ambush and battling with all his might against the kingdom of Christ, so that he will not release men unless he is forced to do so by the divine power of the Spirit, it once more becomes clear that there can be no free will.'[1613] To this I have replied that Luther enormously exaggerates the power of Satan and the wickedness of the flesh. And yet we frankly admit that a human sinner cannot free himself from the tyranny of Satan by his natural powers without the assistance of grace, but it does not follow from this that mankind has no free will. For we do not take 'free' to mean the ability to do whatever one wishes by his own power.[1614]

The third is this: 'If we believe that original sin has undone us to such a degree that even in those who are led by the Spirit it is always busy making trouble for us by struggling against the good, it is clear that in a person devoid of the Spirit there is nothing left that can turn towards the good, but only towards evil.'[1615] To this I have replied that even we do not

* * * * *

[1610] Cf Matt 25:41–6.
[1611] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 786:3–7 / LW 33 293
[1612] See *Hyperaspistes 1* CWE 76 158.
[1613] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 786:7–10 / LW 33 293
[1614] See 398–9 above.
[1615] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 786:10–14 / LW 33 293

teach that free will by its own power can effectively turn from evil towards the good except with the assistance of grace, but rather that even in evil persons there is a certain inborn horror of baseness and a tendency or an inclination towards virtue, in accord with the highest powers of the mind, which have been corrupted but not extinguished in mankind, and that those powers can do something by making themselves available to grace, whether operating or cooperating grace, and by not turning away from grace.[1616]

The fourth is this: 'If the Jews, who pursued righteousness with all their might, fell headlong into unrighteousness, and the gentiles, who pursued wickedness, obtained righteousness unexpectedly and as a free gift, it is likewise clear from the fact itself and from experience that a person without grace can will nothing but evil.'[1617] To this I replied that here righteousness does not mean the righteousness that corresponds to innocence and is opposed to vice, but rather the righteousness of the Jews, which consisted in observing the ceremonies and performing external works. In the pursuit of this righteousness the carnal Jews were tied to the letter and did not obtain true spiritual righteousness, which was revealed by the gospel; and the gentiles, who were set apart from the observance of the Law (that is, did not pursue the righteousness of the Jews), obtained true righteousness by conforming to the gospel, which promised them remission of their sins as a free gift. A gift is not given to someone who does not want to have it. And a gift does not cease being gratuitous if, when by free will someone makes himself available to the offered gift, God, who is merciful to all, judges him worthy to receive it because, when he is invited by grace to accept it, he complies and does not turn away. If we take 'good' to mean what makes a person blessed, we grant that free will is not sufficient by itself either to seek or to obtain it, since whoever truly wills that good already has what he wills. But we posit that there are certain good deeds that do not justify but prepare for justification and are conducive to the retention and augmentation of righteousness. In such deeds, according to some, free will plays some part. Others prefer to think that even in such deeds there is preparatory grace and also some faith, although it is imperfect and not adequate to the justification of the Spirit. But God in his goodness will not allow any mortal to lack this grace.[1618]

The fifth is this: 'If we believe that Christ redeemed mankind by his own blood, we are forced to grant that the whole man was lost; otherwise

* * * * *

[1616] See 585–94 above.

[1617] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 786:14–17 / LW 33 293

[1618] See 358–62 above.

we make Christ either superfluous or the redeemer of the lowest faculties. Therefore free will does not exist.'[1619] I responded to this by showing that no part of a person is totally sound but that nevertheless in the highest faculties of the mind there remains a certain knowledge of virtue and a pressure and inclination towards what is right, but because of the tyranny of sin these vestiges are unequal to the task of achieving the grace of the gospel. But when Luther bases his argument on this, as if I considered all human faculties to be healthy and sound, he has no better grounds for concluding that Christ would be superfluous or a redeemer of the lowest faculties than if someone should say that for him a physician is superfluous because his intestines are healthy, though he suffers from ailments in his head and stomach,[1620] or that he has no need of a barber because he can see shadowy figures through the rheum in his eyes.[1621]

Finally, he gives the tragedy a comic ending.[1622] You would say the fellow is speaking with brotherly love and is concerned about the salvation of his neighbour. I am addressed as 'my dear Erasmus.' He beseeches me in the name of Christ to take up a better cause. I am proclaimed to be endowed by God with many great gifts, which are also most noble, with various talents but especially intelligence, learning, and eloquence. He demeans himself so as to profess that he is nothing, except that he ventures to boast that he is a Christian. I am praised to the high heavens because out of all his opponents I am the only one who took up the principal matter, the only one who went for the jugular. For this reason he offers me thanks from the bottom of his heart and is angry with those who troubled him with irrelevant questions and with others who now boast of having new spirits and new revelations; he thinks that if they had followed my example, the Christian world would have more peace and concord.[1623] What could be calmer and more loving than this language? But how does it match earlier parts of the work, where I am painted in different colours? Here he attributes too much to me; there he strips everything from me; he is never balanced or even consistent. It would have been better if he had moderated his style throughout the whole dispute and in doing so had been consistent. In that

* * * * *

[1619] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 786:18–20 / LW 33 293

[1620] See 657–8 above.

[1621] Erasmus is thinking of barber-surgeons. According to Celsus *De medicina* (6.6.1E–F, 6.6.16A–C, 6.6.35) certain kinds of ophthalmia which produce rheum are to be treated by bloodletting. Cf *Adagia* I vi 70.

[1622] Cf *Adagia* II viii 91 and I ii 36.

[1623] Erasmus is replying to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 786:21–35 / LW 33 294.

way he would have gained credibility and would have shown himself as a model of the Christian debater. But if he wished to correct an erring friend, all his witticisms, jeers and insults, mocks and moues, could have alienated even someone who was attentive and willing to be taught; they served only to make a knotty problem even more involved, and they deprived him of most of his credibility. It is surprising that he thanks me from the bottom of his heart because of all his opponents I am the only one who argued this point, since among others John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, published a volume in which he defended free will against Luther's *Assertion*,[1624] and I know that he is not unaware of it. He should rather have thanked me on the grounds that of all his opponents I am the only one who handled the matter without contempt for anyone and with unfailing politeness, and that feature, at least, he should have imitated. As it is, while others treated him roughly, he spews out all his bile on me, thinking he can put me to flight with savage language; later – and at the advice of his friends, I suspect – he goes against the grain by tempering his style. In fact, if he was as concerned about the peace and concord of the Christian people as he makes out he was, he would not have treated many points, and he would have played out the whole script quite differently. But if he had handled the matter in a genuine Christian spirit and had come to the aid of failing piety with appropriate moderation, he could not have put me off either with praise – whether sincere or feigned, to me they are certainly odious – or with insults and mocks and moues.

And if I cannot handle the matter any more skilfully than I did in *Discussion*, he begs me to be content with my gift and to go on busying myself about promoting language and good writing, which up to now I have done with great praise and profit.[1625] On those grounds he himself also respects and reveres me and confesses that he owes not a little to my labours. If he thought I was unequal to the task I had undertaken, why did he reply to me rather than to others? As for his pretext of my authority, I have shown how silly that argument is. He says it is not surprising if God instructs Moses through Jethro or Paul through Ananias.[1626] Such remarkable modesty! But this tune differs strikingly from what preceded it. As for me, even from the time of my childhood I would not be reluctant to learn what it is necessary to know. But did Jethro instruct Moses or Ananias Paul in

* * * * *

[1624] See n485 above.

[1625] In this paragraph Erasmus repies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 786:35–787:3 / LW 294–5.

[1626] Exod 18:13–27; Acts 9:10–19

the same fashion as Luther here teaches Erasmus? Even a grammar-school teacher would not instruct a child in an elementary class with such insolence. As for his wish that God would make me as superior to him in this matter as I am in all others, indeed I would not wish to be superior in error. Certainly up to this point Luther has not convinced me of the point he has tried with all his might to make me accept; so far is he from doing so that now I attribute somewhat more to free will than I did before.

And because Luther wrote to some friend, 'Let Erasmus learn about Christ and say farewell to human wisdom; no one understands these things unless he has the Spirit of God,' I alluded to this in the conclusion of *A Discussion*, where I reply: 'If I have not yet understood what Christ is, certainly up to now I have been far off target. But I would very much like to know what spirit so many Doctors and Christians had.'[1627] To this he responds by saying, 'I think you yourself see what that implies,'[1628] meaning that it is extraordinarily shameless of me to think that up till now I have known Christ, that is, have been a Christian. For that is all I meant, and I make no claim to arcane knowledge of Christ but only to a knowledge of him that is sufficient for salvation. But when he adds, 'But all will not be mistaken just because you or I are mistaken,'[1629] I do not understand very well what he means. If he is in doubt about whether he is mistaken, why does he speak a little later as follows: 'I have not discussed, but I have asserted and I do assert, and I do not want anyone to have the right to pass judgment, but I urge everyone to submit'?[1630] But he will deny that this remark was made out of modesty, not sincerely. But how can he set me apart from everyone, since if I am mistaken, I am mistaken with everyone? It would have been more fitting for him to say: 'You have not escaped error simply because you are in error together with the Doctors of the church and the people of Christ.' He adds these words: 'God is preached as marvellous in his saints, so that we may consider as saints those who are far removed from sanctity.'[1631] This is the eulogy he bestows on all the Doctors of the church and all the nations of Christendom from the time of the apostles up to the present age – except for Manichaeus and Wyclif. What he adds is quite true: 'And it is not hard to imagine that, since you are human, you have not correctly understood or examined with sufficient care the Scriptures or

* * * * *

[1627] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 88 and n404; in this paragraph Erasmus replies to *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 787:3–15 / LW 33 295.
[1628] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 787:4–5 / LW 33 295
[1629] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 787:5–6 / LW 33 295
[1630] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 787:11–12 / LW 33 295
[1631] Ps 67:36; *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 787:6–7 / LW 33 295

the sayings of the Fathers according to which you think you have hit the bull's-eye.'[1632] But the same words could be turned back on him. But what are those sayings of the Fathers, since he himself grants that all the Doctors of the church assert free will except Wyclif? Unless, perhaps, he is suggesting that they meant something different from what they said. But how does he gather that I am careless and ignorant? Because I profess that I am discussing, not asserting. 'No one writes this way,' he says, 'if he sees deeply into the matter and understands it correctly.'[1633] Quite the contrary, we see that no one asserts more vehemently than someone who knows very little about the matter. I did assert that free will exists; what it does and to what extent it acts I said that I discuss, because the opinions of the orthodox vary. If I had said 'most certain assertion' instead of *A Discussion*, if my parting sentence had been 'I have not discussed but rather I have asserted and I do assert, and I do not want anyone to have the right to judge but rather I urge everyone to submit,' would that have made my opinion the tiniest bit more certain? Finally, he prays for me that 'the Lord, whose cause this is, will enlighten me and make me a tiny vessel for honour and glory.'[1634] Yes indeed, even a tiny tiny vessel, if it is too much to be a tiny vessel.[1635] For I would prefer, I would certainly prefer to be a fragile little Samian saltcellar in the house of God than a large iron barrel in a family which is not recognized by the Lord. And at the same time as this pious fellow wishes these things for me, he makes me blind and a contemptible and shameful vessel,[1636] and together with me he includes the universal church, hardly thinking what I in turn could pray for him if I delighted in such trickery.

[ERASMUS' CONCLUSIONS]

[*The terms of the controversy and their history*]

Up till now I have responded, not without considerable tedium, to Luther's disputation, or rather brawl. Now let us touch a bit on the heart of the matter and quickly come to the end of the volume.[1637]

* * * * *

[1632] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 787:7–9 / LW 33 295

[1633] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 787:9–11 / LW 33 295

[1634] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 787:13–14 / LW 33 295

[1635] Luther uses the diminutive *vasculum*; Erasmus goes him one better by coining a comic diminutive of his diminutive, *vascululum*.

[1636] Cf Rom 2:21 and 2 Tim 20–1. See 552 above.

[1637] On Erasmus' presentation of his own views in *Hyperaspistes* 2 see CWE 76 introduction xcvi–civ.

LB X 1520E

And so, first, to take up the case of the word itself, we grant that the Greek word τὸ αὐτεξούσιον is a lofty expression, as is the Latin *liberum arbitrium* ['free choice' or 'free will'], which came to us straight from the schools of the philosophers in the early years of the church; the philosophers attributed a great deal to human reason because they were ignorant of grace. But because we who have been instructed in Holy Scripture rightly attribute the most to grace, the loftiness of the name does not quite correspond to the thing that it signifies. To be sure, we must also grant that neither the Greek nor the Latin for it can be found anywhere in the canonical books. But if someone wanted to call the term into question as a strange expression, that should have been done in the early years of the church. As it is, since these terms were used by those who were nearest to the apostles in time or had even seen the apostles, and since by common consent throughout the ages up to our own times they have been accepted by the leaders of the church with no depreciation of grace, it is foreign to Christian moderation to make a melodramatic fuss over them now, especially since so many terms that are not found in Holy Scripture have been accepted to the point that it is heretical to refuse to acknowledge them, such as 'consubstantial,' 'the perpetual virginity of Mary,' and 'three persons, one essence.'

But the words 'fate' and 'necessity' have always been looked upon with disfavour by the more judicious philosophers, and with even more disfavour by Christians. For the two words have the same meaning; what the Greeks call ἀνάγκη the Latins frequently translate as *fatum*. No other feature of Manichaeism was more execrable than its devising of two principles: it made one part of man irrevocably evil, the other part necessarily good, and thus introduced a double necessity into the one person.[1638] This was the reason that Julian, who revived the Pelagian dogma,[1639] charged that Augustine agreed with Manichaeus by exaggerating original sin and thus diminishing free will and attributing everything to grace. But in his books addressed to Boniface, Augustine energetically rejected this charge as false.[1640] I do not see how Luther can do so, however, since he makes the entire person flesh even with respect to his primary faculties and makes Satan reign in the flesh even after the infusion of the Spirit, since he overemphasizes original sin and the vitiated nature of man, and since he denies that man is in any way capable of accepting or rejecting grace, but is simply

* * * * *

[1638] See n1549 above.

[1639] On Julian see n590 above.

[1640] *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* (addressed to Pope Boniface I) 1.2.4–1.4.8 CSEL 60 425:11–429:20

acted upon by God as a saw is acted upon by a carpenter. And so you see he has gone wrong here in two ways: first, even though all novelty is a stumbling-block, they[1641] not only do everything they can to eliminate terms that are fully accepted but they also try hard to bring back terms that are novel and long since totally rejected, paying no attention to the objections of Paul, who ordered Timothy to avoid or to reject profane verbal novelties.[1642] If it is pious to reject such words when they appear, it is wicked to bring them back after they have been long since totally rejected. They cannot put up with the term 'free will,' which derives from the philosophers but was also accepted by the most ancient orthodox teachers. And he favours the term 'fate' or 'necessity'! What is their source? The casters of horoscopes. Who uses them? Pagan poets, but all the orthodox have always disapproved of them.

So much for the terms. Now let us consider the matter itself. Before this argument about grace and free will became very bitter, the orthodox attributed a little more to human powers than they did afterwards. Augustine was once one of their number: he attributed to our natural powers faith and good will; for the former attribution he apologizes, and he recants the second after the emergence of Pelagius. But if you consider how little is left to free will by this man and those who follow him – Bernard, and whoever wrote the two books on *The Calling of the Gentiles* which go under the name of Ambrose, and likewise whoever wrote the books of *Hypognosticon* which go under the name of Augustine – you will grant that they assert the term 'free will' rather than approve of the thing.[1643] For St Bernard, who seems to have drawn whatever he has to say on this subject from the books of St Augustine, even though he tries hard to avoid seeming to do so by

* * * * *

[1641] Apparently Erasmus switches to the plural here because he includes Wyclif and Karlstadt along with Luther.

[1642] 1 Tim 6:20

[1643] Augustine *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 1.1–3.5 PL 44 881–5; these three chapters are devoted to defending free will, but the remaining twenty-one chapters defend grace. Pseudo-Ambrose in *De vocatione omnium gentium* defends free will in chapters 7 and 8 of book 1 (PL 51 653–7), but in most of the other chapters and particularly in the last eleven chapters of book 1 (15–25 PL 51 668–86) and in some of the chapters of book 2 he emphasizes the unfathomable mysteries of the workings of grace. The Pseudo-Augustine *Hypognosticon* (PL 45 1611–64) is predominantly anti-Pelagian and hence places most emphasis on grace rather than free will. Since all three works are primarily anti-Pelagian (especially the first and the third) it is hardly surprising that they place much more emphasis on grace than on free will.

deliberately making up new terms, defines it as follows: the free condition of the mind on its own.[1644] When you hear this you think he has a very grand notion of free will. So too he defines the will as follows: 'The will is a rational movement presiding over sensation and appetite.' He attributes so much to it that he adds reason to it only as a handmaiden, as it were. And at the same time he denies that there can be any necessity where there is a will, adding that where necessity reigns neither good nor evil can be attributed to anyone.[1645] This, then, is the splendid prelude. But when he gets down to it and divides man's activity into three parts, nature, counsel, and pleasure, meaning by counsel an effective assent to grace when it is offered, there he attributes nothing at all to human power, just as Augustine does not. By pleasure he means the consummation of human happiness, which frees us not only from sin but from all suffering. And so he posits three freedoms: natural freedom, freedom of counsel, and freedom of pleasure. For he seems to have delighted in such novel words. In the last two he attributed nothing to man. For they are liberations rather than freedoms, and God effects them in us with no contribution from us. I am talking about the origin of justifying grace, in which they insist man does nothing – although after the inception of grace the human will acts together with it – and about the happiness of the next life.[1646] There remains natural freedom, which he attributed to man subject to sin as the same sort of freedom he attributed to the wicked spirits: they are able to will neither good nor evil but only to will.[1647]Augustine seems to have meant the same thing when he attributed free will also to Pharaoh, because he willingly did what he did, even though he had no freedom to do good.[1648] And he says several times that the human will is always free but not always good.[1649] At any rate the freedom which they attribute to vitiated nature is certainly a wretched thing, hardly worthy of that splendid word. And then Bernard's subtle point that the will cannot be forced because if it is forced it ceases to be a will, that seems to me – and I say it with all respect for such a great man – to be almost sophistical and of no use in solving this problem.[1650] And it seems unlikely that the earliest theologians, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, and Hilary, who attribute free will to mankind, meant by it what Augustine and Bernard did.[1651] It is also irrelevant that some attribute free will to wicked men and damned spirits in so far as they can do one thing or another, not that they can do or choose what is good.[1652] But in fact there is even controversy among the scholastics about whether God can force the wills of the demons even with violent coercion.[1653]

[1644] *Tractatus* 1.2 and 2.3 in *Opera omnia* III 167:13, 30 / *On Grace and Free Choice* in *Treatises* III 55

[1645] *Tractatus* 2.3–5 in *Opera omnia* III 168:1–169:15 / *On Grace and Free Choice* in *Treatises* III 58–9

[1646] That is, about freedom of counsel (granted by God's free gift of justifying grace) and freedom of pleasure (granted by grace in the next life). Discussing another set of three, thinking the good, consenting to it, and carrying it out, Bernard says: 'Si ergo Deus tria haec, hoc est bonum cogitare, velle, perficere, operatur in nobis, primum profecto sine nobis, secundum nobiscum, tertium per nos facit ... A Deo ergo sine dubio nostrae fit salutis exordium, nec per nos utique, nec nobiscum. Verum consensus et opus, etsi non ex nobis, non iam tamen sine nobis' ('If, then, God works these three things in us, namely thinking, willing, and accomplishing the good, the first he does without us; the second, with us; and the third, through us ... There can be no doubt, therefore, that the beginning of our salvation rests with God, and is enacted neither through us nor with us. The consent and the work, however, though not originating from us, nevertheless are not without us'); see *Tractatus* 14.46 in *Opera omnia* III 199:9–11, 15–18 / *On Grace and Free Choice* in *Treatises* III 105–6. Erasmus says 'they insist' because he is referring to the position held not only by Bernard but by Augustine and his followers.

* * * * *

[1647] Bernard uses *natura* 'nature,' *consilium* 'counsel,' and *complacitum* 'pleasure' in the special sense explained by Erasmus: the natural freedom to will (though not to will what is salvifically good), the freedom to choose what eliminates sin (what is salvifically good), and the freedom to carry out the choice so as to attain true pleasure here or (most completely) in heaven. Of these the last two depend solely on grace, and the first man shares with the condemned angels. See *Tractatus* 4.11–12, 8.24–7, 9.30–1 in *Opera omnia* III 173:19–175:17, 183:16–185:20, 187:8–188:21 / *On Grace and Free Choice* in *Treatises III* 66–8, 181–3, 85–7.

[1648] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 23.45 PL 44 911

[1649] For example, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 15.31 PL 44 899

[1650] *Tractatus* 2.4 in *Opera omnia* III 168.10–17 / *On Grace and Free Choice* in *Treatises III* 58

[1651] An idea confirmed by Jaroslav Pelikan in *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* 5 vols (Chicago and London 1971–89) I 279–84

[1652] Bernard, for example, makes this point in *Tractatus* 9.30–1 in *Opera omnia* III 187:8–188:21 / *On Grace and Free Choice* in *Treatises III* 85–7.

[1653] Peter Lombard says that both the good and bad angels have free will, even though the good cannot turn to what is evil and the devils cannot turn to what is good; see *Sententiae* II dist 7.2 PL 192 664. Thomas Aquinas (*Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi* II dist 7 q 1 a 2 and *Summa theologiae* I q 64 a 2) and Scotus (*Commentarium Oxoniense in quatuor libros Sententiarum* II dist 7 q 1 aa 1–3) analyse the point in greater detail. But Gabriel Biel takes up specifically the point about coercion of the devils' will, setting out to prove on the one hand that 'utrorumque bonorum et malorum voluntatis arbitrium a coactione est libera' ('the choice of the will, both of the good

But to get to the point without beating about the bush, this much Luther has on his side: no one who has not been reborn can will anything good by means of free will; and from this there follows a certain kind of necessity, which Luther calls necessity of immutability, but it can also be posited in the good angels and in God, since God cannot change his nature, and the good angels cannot degenerate into evildoers. But from the start he should have refrained from using this execrable word instead of inciting uprisings and then having to bring forth a novel distinction about necessity. But in fact on this point Luther adds on his own that, just as a person who sins cannot turn to the good by his own power, so too someone reborn in the Spirit cannot turn to evil unless grace is arbitrarily withdrawn, and he denies that this can happen because someone deserves it, just as grace is offered to a person without his deserving it. They[1654] also grant that in cases where there is no will, there is also neither sin nor merit, no more than in brute beasts, who have only a natural appetite because they lack reason, without which there is no will. In fact, however, some attribute reason also to brute animals, but a reason below that of mankind; and in mankind there remains the sensitive appetite, which is sometimes called will and is in fact a sort of will. However that may be, there is little difference between the natural appetite that we have in common with brute animals and a will that is inborn in everyone but is so wrenched towards evil that it cannot turn in any way towards the good.

The Pelagians taught that original sin was not transmitted to the descendants of Adam but only death, which in itself is not evil and which Pliny even says was given to mankind by the gods as a great benefaction, so much so that Ambrose also wrote *The Goodness of Death.*[1655] Luther

* * * * *

and the bad [angels] is free from coercion'), but that in a special sense 'obstinatio tollit liberum arbitrium ... quantum ad actus a deo immediate causatos. Non autem ad alios a voluntate eliciendos. Unde quantum ad actum beatificum boni non sunt liberi. Et neque mali quantum ad actum in quo essentialis consistet miseria' ('the fixing takes away their free will in so far as concerns acts immediately caused by God. But not as concerns other acts undertaken by the will. Hence, as concerns the acts of beatification the good [angels] are not free. So too the bad are not free as concerns the act in which their essential misery consists'); see Gabriel Biel *Epitome et collectorium ex Occamo circa quatuor Sententiarum libros* (Tübingen 1501; repr Frankfurt am Main 1965) sigs ee5–5v.

[1654] That is, presumably, Luther, Wyclif, and Karlstadt

[1655] Pliny *Naturalis historia* 2.5.27; Ambrose *De bono mortis* PL 14 539–67 rightly disagrees with this opinion, but he goes wrong in that he enormously overemphasizes original sin, rebounding from Pelagius so as almost to run into Manichaeus. For when he leaves in human nature no seeds of virtue and no inclination towards what is good but rather makes human nature totally flesh, that is, wicked passions, does he not present it as so evil that grace does not so much recreate nature as create a new nature? He derives this distortion from the fact that the transition from vice to piety is said to be a rebirth and a resurrection, as if it were a change from not being to being and from death to life, because Paul calls someone who is reborn a new creation;[1656] Luther pays little attention to the fact that all this is said figuratively according to idiomatic Hebrew speech and that it signifies an extraordinary change in a person, just as we say that a person has come to life if he is recalled from the depths of despair to good prospects and we say that someone has become another person if there is an enormous change in his behaviour. Thus exegetes teach that the blind man in the Gospel, whose sight Christ restored, signifies human nature, not because it sees nothing on its own, but because it is overwhelmed with dense darkness, and sees very little compared with what is revealed by the light of grace.[1657] The same human nature is signified by the woman who was bent double, by Peter's mother-in-law when she had a fever, by the dead daughter of the president of a synagogue, by the paralysed man.[1658] But there is a great difference

* * * * *

[1656] 2 Cor 5:17

[1657] Mark 8:22–6, 10:46–52; John 9:1–12. Walafrid Strabo's *Glossa ordinaria* on Mark 8:23 PL 114 210 and Thomas Aquinas' *Catena aurea* Mark 8.3 quote Bede's *In Marci evangelium expositio* on 8:25 making the point that the blind man represents blind human nature healed by divine grace. *Catena aurea* John 9.1 quotes Augustine *In Ioannis evangelium tractatus* 124 44.1 (PL 35 1713) and Gregory's *Moralia* 8.30 (PL 75 832) making the same point.

[1658] Luke 13:11–13; Matt 8:14; Mark 5:22–43; Matt 9:2–7. *Glossa ordinaria* on Luke 13:11 (PL 114 303) quotes Zacharias Chrysopolitanus *In unum ex quatuor sive de concordia evangelistarum* 3.103 (PL 186 325–6) and *Catena aurea* Luke 13:3 quotes Gregory's 40 *Homiliae in evangelia* 2.31 (PL 76 1228) to the effect that the woman bent double and cured represents human nature healed by divine grace. *Catena aurea* Matt 8.4 quotes Jerome *Commentaria in evangelium Matthaei* book 1 on Matt 8:14 (PL 26 51) and Bede *In Matthaei evangelium expositio* 2.8 (PL 92 41) making the same point about Peter's mother-in-law. *Glossa ordinaria* on Mark 5:22 (PL 114 198) quotes Jerome *Commentaria in evangelium Matthaei* book 1 on Matt 9:18–20 (PL 26 58) and Zacharias Chrysopolitanus *In unum ex quatuor sive de concordia evangelistarum* 2.60 (PL 186 195) and *Catena aurea* Mark 5.3 quotes Bede *In Marci evangelium expositio* 2.5 (PL 92 179) making the point between disabled or sick and deceased. Nor is it necessary that in figures of speech (and Scripture is full of them) the similarity hold in all respects. On one point, clearly, the exegetes agree: free will has been wounded by sin, not destroyed; disabled, not amputated; it is sickly, not dead; blear-eyed, not blind; bent over, not laid low, so that it is damped down, not put out. And yet in the course of an argument they sometimes act as if they were insisting that it is quite extinguished in so far as the knowledge and execution of good is concerned – which is what Luther constantly and strenuously asserts, or rather he simply denies there is any such thing as free will at all. Whoever wrote the book *Hypognosticon* teaches that it is deprived of the benefit of being able to choose but that the name and the rationale remain.[1659] By 'rationale' I think he means a mental notion of something that was once part of created nature and can exist again in nature when it is restored. But if the will is not properly said to be free unless it can turn to good or evil by its own power, there seems to be no freedom in corrupt nature, and according to this rationale free will is indeed nothing more than a name with no reality.[1660]

[*Grace and the process of conversion*]

The ancient Fathers also agree in professing that the human will, once it is freed by the Spirit, cooperates with grace, so that Paul says: 'We are cohelpers with God.'[1661] And on these grounds they establish a fountain of merit because by willing we assist, as it were, the grace acting in us. But since every process has three parts, a beginning, a growth, and a fulfilment, in the beginning and the fulfilment they attribute nothing, as I said, to the human will but rather they assign everything to the grace which draws and perfects. In the middle, between the grace which draws towards justification and that which fulfils in glory, there they attribute something to free

* * * * *

that the raising of the president's daughter and the healing of the woman with a flow of blood represent human nature restored and healed by divine grace. Finally *Catena aurea* Matt 9.1 quotes Hilary *In evangelium Matthaei commentarius* 8.5 (PL 9 960) making the point that the paralysed man represents all of the gentiles.

[1659] Pseudo-Augustine *Hypognosticon* 3.4 PL 45 1623: 'Per peccatum ergo, liberum arbitrium hominis possibilitatis bonum perdidit, non nomen et rationem' ('Through sin, therefore, mankind's free choice lost any possible good but kept its name and rationale').

[1660] 'A name with no reality' (*titulus sine re*) is Luther's phrase in *Assertio* article 36 WA 7 146:6 / CWE 76 306.

[1661] 1 Cor 3:9

will both for good and for evil, namely in that once it is freed by means of grace it cooperates with operating grace or it withdraws itself from it.[1662] But if grace does not remain except in so far as we will it to do so, and if a person can dismiss grace by means of free will – and if he does this he deserves hell and if he does not he deserves eternal life – I do not see any reason why the same cannot be said about justifying grace, which Augustine calls operating grace. If the whole work is ascribed to grace but it is nevertheless carried out by a person who acts together with the action of grace, and at the same time no injury is done to grace, why should it be absurd to say that in a similar way human free will strives for operating grace? The Pelagians also agree with the orthodox in professing that grace cooperates with free will. But Augustine will not tolerate it when they say a person's good intentions are aided by grace, as if the onset of grace depended on man and a person's good intentions preceded grace, so that the assent whereby a person makes himself available to operating grace merits justifying grace.[1663] And therefore he will not allow God to be called the helper of good intentions but their bestower.[1664] And that is the reason for his basic principle: God does many good things in man that man does not do; but man does many things that God does not do.[1665] By these words he means that God makes our will good with no help from us. In order to untie this knotty problem, he introduces a third kind of grace, namely preparatory grace, which he seems to distinguish from operating and cooperating grace.[1666] By this device he avoids attributing anything to human choice in the reception of justifying grace. But even if we concede that the grace of God is given only to those willing to accept it and that preparatory grace is a gift of God, it will be necessary to have another preparatory grace to prepare us for the preparatory grace, and another one to prepare us for that one, and so on to infinity, until we come to the gift of nature. But since

* * * * *

[1662] On the three parts of the process see *A Discussion* CWE 76 67 and n325. On operating and cooperating grace see *A Discussion* CWE 76 24 n79 and 30 n109.

[1663] For example, *De dono perseverantiae* 21.54 PL 45 1026–7; *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 3.7 PL 44 964–5; see McSorley 73–6.

[1664] *Contra duos epistolas Pelagianorum* 3.4.13 PL 44 597

[1665] Erasmus misremembered the second clause. Augustine has: 'Quapropter multa Deus facit in homine bona, quae non facit homo: nulla vero facit homo, quae non facit Deus ut faciat homo' ('Therefore God does many good things in man which man does not do: but man does none which God does not make him capable of doing'); see *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* 2.21 PL 44 586.

[1666] See Pseudo-Augustine *Hypognosticon* 3.4.5 and 3.13.29 PL 45 1624, 1635–6 and n1662 above.

the theologians profess that there is only one grace, which is called by various names according to its various effects, they could also have made up other names for grace. Hence it seems simpler to say that our disabled natural powers are always helped by the assistance of grace, whatever kind of grace it may be. What the Pelagians meant I do not know. I can only go by Augustine's quotations from the books of Julian, which, in my opinion, might have been held to be true if they were favourably interpreted. A large part of this argument seems to have arisen from words rather than from the matter itself, and such verbal battles, if there is any admixture of human competitiveness, can easily turn into brawling.

When we speak of merit, it does not automatically mean the kind that excludes grace, as is the case in ordinary transactions, where, once a craftsman has got a just wage for his work, no favour[1667] is owed on either side (though in the obligations of friendship, even after a good deed has been amply repaid a mutual debt of favour remains in full). Such are the works and such are the merits which the apostle Paul writes are inconsistent with grace.[1668] But we speak of the sort of merit which excludes the unworthy. The more precious God's grace is, the more it should be embraced when it is offered and the more it should be preserved when it has been offered. Therefore, just as we say that someone is unworthy of favour if he neglects it when it is offered, or does not preserve it once he possesses it but rather misuses it, so too in a sense a person is worthy of God's gift if he accepts it eagerly when it is offered and, once it has been accepted, takes the greatest care not to lose it. Oftentimes gratitude alone makes people worthy of generosity, and ingratitude, on the other hand, makes them unworthy. Thus someone who teaches gratis communicates his learning much more willingly and eagerly if his students are eager and attentive than if they are listless and malcontent. And yet the teaching does not lose the character of a free gift simply because a person with natural talent and eagerness to learn is judged worthy of an education rather than another who lacks those qualities. And just as no human being confers a benefit on someone unwilling to have it, so too no one would bestow a benefit on someone who he knows would abuse it shamefully. And among human beings a person is said to bestow a benefit on someone unworthy of it if he gives it to someone who refuses to accept it or does not accept it appropriately. Then, too, people consider someone unworthy of what he has received if he did not acknowledge the generosity of the giver or used it inappropriately or neglected it.

* * * * *

[1667] Latin *gratiam*

[1668] See 726–7 below.

Nor is he said to be unworthy because he did not deserve the benefit but because he did not acknowledge it. For not having deserved it is common to the worthy and the unworthy. But someone who is said to be unworthy is so for two reasons: both because he did not deserve it and because he did not receive it and keep it as he ought to have done. And someone who is said to be worthy is not designated as such because the benefit was owed to him because of his merits – otherwise it would be repaying a debt not conferring a benefit – but because he is unworthy in one way only, that is, because he has not merited it; but in another way he is worthy in the eyes of the giver, who wishes to exercise his generosity freely indeed, but also correctly, that is, to confer a benefit, not waste it. For nothing is more wasted, as the proverb rightly says, than what is given to the ungrateful,[1669] and according to Publilius he who bestows a benefit on someone worthy of it receives a benefit by giving it.[1670] And a person is said to be worthy of greater generosity if he has received lesser gifts gratefully and used them well. Nor does such worthiness keep the benefit from being a free gift and wholly owed to the generous giver; it merely excludes unworthiness. Nor does it change the benefit into a wage owed for work but rather it keeps the benefit from being given to someone who does not want it or is ungrateful for it and would misuse it. For among human beings it must be supposed that someone who does not accept it as he ought would not use it well. We should imagine the same thing happens with God's grace. He is, of course, a benefactor by nature, 'giving richly to all,'[1671] and he is not depleted by his generosity and has no need of favours in return; but still he does not will to bestow his generosity on those who scorn it or are ungrateful or abuse it. For what is given either because it has been earned by past merit or in hope of a profit is not a benefit but is, rather, in the one case payment of a debt and in the other doing business rather than exercising generosity; so too it is not beneficence but extravagance – indeed it is not a good deed but rather a crime – to give something that will injure the person who receives it. Moreover, just as a person is rightly said to be stripped of grace if he abuses it, so too he is rightly said to receive an increase of grace if he has used God's gift well. And the expression 'merit' does not imply a debt or a wage but rather excludes the unworthiness of the person who receives or possesses something.

* * * * *

[1669] Cf 'Perit quod facis ingrato' ('What you do for an ungrateful person is wasted') in Henry T. Riley *A Dictionary of Latin and Greek Quotations, Proverbs, Maxims, and Mottos, Classical and Mediaeval* (London 1876) 329.

[1670] Publilius Syrus *Sententiae* 65

[1671] Rom 10:12

In this way those in the Gospel who made excuses when they were invited to the banquet are said to be unworthy of it.[1672] What then? Were the blind and the lame and the paupers on the streetcorner worthy? Not at all, and perhaps even somewhat less so than the others if we are speaking of merit that deserves a reward. But they are said to be worthy because they gratefully embraced a gift freely given. And to embrace is to assent and to assent is the beginning of human happiness. But the servant in Matthew who industriously invested the talent entrusted to him was enriched with the profit and was put in charge of greater resources – that is, of ten cities, according to Luke;[1673] and nevertheless he owed everything to the free generosity of his master. On the other hand, the servant who buried the single talent he had received was deprived of it, and what was taken away from the lazy servant was added to the gains of the industrious one. But the lazy one was cast into outer darkness: if he was punished thus after he returned the talent to his master just as he had received it, how would he have suffered if he had squandered it irresponsibly? 'To those who have it shall be given and they shall abound; but from those who do not have, even what they have shall be taken way.'[1674] For someone is said not to have if he has a benefit in such a way that he does not have it, that is, if he either ascribes the favour to his own merit or uses it otherwise than he ought. In this case, then, what is called worthiness in someone who receives and uses something well is what I think the theologians call congruous merit.[1675] That expression, if it is rightly understood, is not inconsistent with the term 'grace,' just as the term wage or even obligation is not inconsistent with grace, especially if you take it as springing from God's promise.[1676] The promise is freely given, and whatever springs from that source is a free gift; but it is not congruous that such a great grace should be bestowed on those who reject it or increased for those who misuse it.

Therefore, just as there is a merit that implies a wage, so there are works that imply a debt and that are diametrically opposed[1677] to grace, such as the works of the Jews that Paul is dealing with in Romans 3[:20]: 'All flesh will not be justified by the works of the Law.' And likewise Galatians

* * * * *

[1672] Matt 22:2–8; Luke 14:16–24

[1673] Matt 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27

[1674] Matt 25:24–30; here Erasmus followed his emended translation in *Novum Testamentum* (LB VI 130E–132A).

[1675] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 29 n106.

[1676] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 28 n103.

[1677] *Adagia* I X 45

2[:16]: 'knowing that a person is not justified by the works of the Law except through faith in Jesus Christ.' It is frivolous for a certain exegete to split hairs by stressing the word 'except,' since it is patent that here it means no more than 'but only.'[1678] Nor is there any danger that good works will seem to be excluded by faith, since in that passage Paul is speaking about the works of the Jews, which were performed without faith and charity; truly good works, however, have faith as their source because it works through love.[1679] Paul is speaking of the works of the Jews in Romans 4: 'But to him who works a wage is assigned not according to grace but as something owed.'[1680] And the Apostle says this not as a general truth but in the context of the arrogant belief of the Jews, who thought that eternal life was owed to them in return for their external works, in just the same way as wages are owed to a carpenter when he has finished a piece of work, and if he were not paid he would have the right to sue for the debt. So too in Corinthians: 'if because of works, then not by grace; if by grace, then not because of works.'[1681] But in Romans 2[:7] he is dealing with a different sort of works: 'but eternal life to those who pursue glory and honour and immortality through patience in doing good works.' Likewise in 2 Corinthians 5[:10]: 'so that each may receive what is due him according to his behaviour when he was in his body, whether good or evil.' This sort of works does not conflict with grace, but rather is attributed to faith which works through love,[1682] because faith is the original source from which everything pours forth that makes us truly pleasing to God, and faith is a free gift of God; but yet it is not given to the unworthy, though it is given to the undeserving. Moreover, since all things are present to God, just as he is rightly said to take grace away from those who abuse his gifts, so too he is rightly said not to give grace to those who he knows would abuse it to their own detriment. And thus it comes about that it is not only not unjust but even merciful for him not to give his grace at all to some or to take it away after it has been bestowed. We could say as much about how the gifts of the Spirit are

* * * * *

[1678] Erasmus makes the same point in his *Novum Testamentum* (LB VI 811 n24).

[1679] Cf Gal 5:6.

[1680] Rom 4:4. The Froben 1527 edition and LB read 2 instead of 4. Either Erasmus or the typesetter cited the wrong chapter.

[1681] Erasmus or the typesetter erred here: the text cited is Rom 11:6, which Erasmus cites in a slightly different form from that of the Vulgate. In his *Novum Testamentum* (LB VI 621–2 n9) he discusses an addition to this text found in Greek manuscripts. He includes the addition in his Greek text and the Latin translation, but in his note he tends to prefer the Vulgate version.

[1682] Gal 5:6

variously distributed, some receiving more, others less. For just as it is right and just for a human being to take away a benefit from someone who uses it badly after he has received it, so too it is right and just for God not to impart his grace to those who he knows will abuse it, with no less certainty than a human being knows that another human being has not used a gift well. At this point, if someone objects that God ought not to confer his grace on someone who will abuse it, we can reply that God offers his grace to many who are unworthy so as to give an example to the good and to throw fear into the wicked, and to make it manifest to everyone that those who perish do so through their own vices, since grace will not fail anyone unless he fails himself – I am speaking only of adults.[1683] And so we have removed the scruple that tormented Augustine, who was so worried that if a person assented to preparatory grace, he might seem to merit justifying grace.[1684]

Another scruple ought to be removed, the one that made him afraid that the onset of grace might seem to arise from free will. He professes that the Pelagians proclaimed an anathema upon those who thought that grace was given according to merit.[1685] If they genuinely proclaimed that, there can be little doubt that they meant merits to which a corresponding reward is owed. One point in Julian's writings he will not tolerate: that a person's good intentions are aided by grace. From this he infers that a person has good intentions without grace but that they are feeble and are assisted when grace is joined with them. If you grant this it seems that grace springs from man, whereas in man there is nothing good except what arises from grace.[1686] But in my judgment Augustine would have had no need to be afraid about this point if he had made distinctions in the term 'good,' as I have done for the terms 'merit' and 'wages.' For just as there are various gradations of grace, so too there are various gradations of goodness or righteousness. Augustine himself invented many names for grace, according to the gradations of their effects, distinguishing sufficient from proficient, operating from cooperating, and then again operating from preparatory. I hardly know whether impelling grace differs from preparatory grace

* * * * *

[1683] Erasmus means that since infants are not morally responsible, they cannot fail themselves. He makes the reservation because Augustine often uses the salvation of children, who cannot earn grace through the use of free will, to refute the Pelagians.

[1684] *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum libri duo* 1.2 PL 40 110–27, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 3.7–4.8 PL 44 964–7, *De dono perseverantiae* 21.54 PL 45 1026–7

[1685] *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 5.10–6.15 PL 44 887–91

[1686] *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* 18.36–24.42 PL 44 567–71 in that preparatory grace moves the will and sometimes impelling grace does not. Now there can be many gradations of preparatory or impelling grace, just as God transforms a person in various ways and step by step, in the same way as nature forms a person step by step and a physician restores a person step by step. And so, whenever a person assents to the operating grace that confers righteousness, the onset of grace does not come from the person but rather from preparatory or impelling grace, which comes first, using some occasion to incite a person to take thought so as to be displeased with himself and want to be better. The ways in which God does this are innumerable: sometimes by means of a faithful wife, servant, or friend he calls an unfaithful husband, master, or friend; sometimes he gets the same effect by sickness, bereavement, or inflicting some other calamity; sometimes he does it by the ministry of the word; at other times, by miracles, apparitions, or dreams; and often he hunts down a person from ambush, as it were, and saves him through what pleases him most, as, for example uxorious men through their wives, and he snared St Hubert as he was hunting,[1687] and he captures avid students through writings; some he draws by the secret whistling of the Spirit.

And good intentions are not automatically said to be good in the sense that they confer beatitude, for whoever has truly good intentions has been justified by grace. But here we use 'good' in the sense of something that approaches some resemblance to goodness and withdraws from evil to some extent, unless, perhaps, we like that opinion of the Stoics, who make all sins equal, teaching that a person is suddenly either completely good or completely evil. But even if, according to some rational scheme, this were true, nevertheless, because such discourse is abhorrent to common sense and foreign to the usual way of thinking in Scripture, it is to be rejected.[1688] The Stoics provide the simile of a man who has fallen into water, and they say that it makes no difference whether he is many feet from the surface or two inches away from it if in any case he dies by drowning. Augustine preferred a comparison drawn from light and darkness. For there is no

* * * * *

[1687] St Hubert was hunting a stag on Good Friday when everyone else was going to church. In a clearing the stag turned and displayed a cross between its horns. A voice from the stag said, 'Unless you turn to the Lord, Hubert, you shall fall into hell.' Hubert was converted and later became bishop of Maastricht. His feast day is November 3. See *Butler's Lives of the Saints* ed and rev Herbert Thurston SJ and Donald Attwater, 4 vols (New York 1956) IV 247–8.

[1688] For an effort to discern Stoic elements in Luther, see Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle 'Stoic Luther' *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 73 (1982) 69–93.

little difference between someone who lives in total darkness, so that he cannot make out anything at all, and someone who makes out something through the darkness, although with uncertainty, by a light which shines far off, however dim it may be, and someone who sees everything clearly by a light that shines nearby. By the same stages, I think, a person proceeds from bright light to total darkness. Both of these processes are exemplified by the tunnel dug through a mountain for the road from Baia to Naples.[1689] When you enter it you have light for a while because of the height of the vault, but before long the light gradually disappears, until finally you come into impenetrable darkness, such as is said to be found in hell. That ordeal would be unbearable if it lasted very long. But a little further on a dim light appears. The light comes through a shaft drilled through the ridge of the mountain above and it is dim and doubtful. It is quickly left behind and you return to profound blackness. When you have gone a little further something like a tiny little star appears in the distance. As you get closer to it, the light becomes more ample and bright, until you can see everything very clearly. What does not correspond in this comparison is that in it we move towards the light, whereas the light of grace moves towards us instead, as the sun gradually disperses the darkness of night by coming to us. And the correspondence would be better if there were a light that moved towards us as we in turn move closer to it, as grace draws near to those who draw near to it. And so, just as a person does not immediately have full vision when he sees by the doubtful light of early dawn, so too a person upon whom some light of grace has breathed its glow is not immediately good, although he is far removed from the profound darkness in which he could not make out anything at all. And yet if he does not turn his eyes away from that light but focuses upon it as much as he can, he is worthy of being shown more light.

But because this change in a person is spoken of as a rebirth, we should also discuss the elements in this simile. What is fastened to the womb is not a person right away: the mass is formed by nature and grows in the manner of plants and mushrooms; then it also has sensation; finally when the foetus has been fully fashioned by the craftmanship of nature, it comes

* * * * *

[1689] A tunnel through the promontory of Posilipo between the bay of Naples and the bay of Baia, 2,244 feet long, 21 feet wide, and in some places as much as 70 feet high, possibly constructed by Marcus Agrippa in 27 BCE, forms the so-called grotto of Posilipo; see *Encyclopedia Britannica* 9th ed, 24 vols (New York 1878–88) 17 188. Erasmus visited Naples and the tunnel in April 1509; see Ep 756:17–21. Cf *Adagia* v ii 20.

out. It looks like a living creature, but considerable time will pass before the rational soul emerges. But nevertheless, by such stages a complete human being is produced. And what makes it a human being is not infused unless the matter is prepared beforehand. For pedagogical purposes, let us imagine that first there is the feminine fluid, shortly thereafter a thickened mass, then a plant, then an animal, then a human being but one that is immature and imperfect, and finally a true human being. And in the same way as we are born, so are we reborn. I always make an exception for the absolute power of God, who can suddenly transform whomever he wishes; I am speaking about what usually happens.[1690] Furthermore, since sin is said to be a disease and Christ is called the physician, let us analyse this simile also. Many are the stages the physician must traverse to achieve the health of an ailing patient. He opens the veins lest the immediate danger of death should overwhelm the sick person, he prescribes his diet, he uses medication to purge the body, a little later he uses other means to purge it,[1691] always accommodating his skill to the powers of nature – which, using its inborn power to fight against the hostile disease and eagerly striving for health, collaborates, as it were, with the physician's skill, and his skill in turn assists this natural power; finally, when nature has regained its strength the physician builds up the patient with strengthening medication until he is completely well. And just as sick people have a certain natural power that abhors sickness and longs for health (which cannot, however, be achieved in severe cases without the effort of a physician), and a patient will not be helped unless he makes himself available to the physician but will grow worse instead, and just as man has an inborn power to see but has it in vain if light is not available (and even light itself is useless if he turns away or closes his eyes), and he will not see what he should unless he focuses his eyes on it as he should, so too grace eggs on nature step by step when it is darkling and sickly until it arrives at that gift which makes us blessed, at least so far as this life is concerned. For to be blessed is to be free of sin and endowed with righteousness.

But just as there is a goodness, or rather goodnesses, which, properly speaking, are not so but rather movements, as it were, towards that sufficient grace that the moderns call 'the grace which makes pleasing,'[1692] so too there are also levels of justification, which gradually form a person and lead him to true justification, but nevertheless in them a person can claim

* * * * *

[1690] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 50 n227.
[1691] Presumably a clyster or enema
[1692] This is the same as justifying grace.

nothing for himself. For imagine, if you will, someone who has acquired a fear of hell and divine judgment because of the sudden death of friends; he is not yet justified, but nevertheless 'the fear of the Lord is' at least some 'beginning of wisdom.'[1693] To what does he owe his horror? To nature? Not at all, you will say, but to impelling grace. If he embraces it by means of free will, it is fitting[1694] that God in his goodness should add more abundant grace; but if he turns away and rejects the gift, whatever it may be, it is by the vicious action of his own will that he perseveres in wickedness. Now if he is shaken by this fear so as to sin less grievously and more timidly, no longer revelling in the worst vices, he has made some progress towards justification. And then if he stops sinning, he comes even closer. If he busily engages in pious works with the same zeal he devoted to the service of his vices, he has true justification. But yet God is not so cantankerous that if someone rejects grace once, he immediately leaves him to his own devices. Quite the contrary, until a person dies God never ceases to use all manner of circumstances to offer occasions to repent. I make an exception of those who because of their extraordinary malice are handed over to their own reprobate understanding.[1695] Therefore, what Augustine says is true: a person's good intentions are not aided by grace but given by grace, if he is referring, as I think he is, to the good will by which a person is justified.[1696] But just as there is in man a natural inclination to vice that Satan continually exploits to tempt him to sin, so too there is in him a natural desire for virtue, though it is imperfect. The impelling grace of God stimulates this desire in thousands of ways to lead it to justification, egging on a person's latent, feeble impulse. If someone calls this natural inclination towards virtue and piety a good intention, there is nothing absurd, as far as I can see, in saying so. But we owe this very intention to the grace which arouses and assists it and which will finally perfect it if we do not neglect the grace. Certainly I do not see here any reason to fear that grace would not be grace, since this natural pressure would be feeble without grace, and to assent to preparatory grace does not merit justifying

* * * * *

[1693] Ps 110:10; Ecclus 1:16

[1694] Latin *congruit*; Erasmus is alluding to *meritum de congruo*. See *A Discussion* CWE 76 29 n106.

[1695] Rom 1:28

[1696] See nn1684–5 above. Erasmus is somewhat imprecise here: Augustine assigns to grace not only the good will by which we are justified but also the initial good intentions which are inspired by impelling or preparatory grace, although they do not produce justification but only lead up to it.

grace but only excludes a person's unworthiness, just as a sick person is no less beholden to a physician because at the urging of the doctor he submitted himself to his treatment, but by doing so he avoids being unworthy of having the physician undertake his cure; and if someone is saved by the advice of a friend, he professes that he owes his life to him, even though the friend's advice would have been useless if he had not willed to follow it, and it was within his power to neglect the advice. Now if you wish to give the name impelling grace to the particular occasions by which a sinner is admonished to repent, I do not have much against it. And yet in these also the will is not entirely inactive, since we lend our ears and give our assent to the occasion which admonishes us, and we certainly do this by our natural power; I am not talking about the assent which gives justification but that which somehow prepares for it.

[*Augustine's stance on the human will*]

Now let us grant that such natural movements of our minds, imperfect as they are without grace, spring from our natural power. Will this pose any risk to God's grace? I do not think so. How is that? Because whatever good remains in us and everything that we can do and are is itself a gift of God. Therefore, any motion away from vice and any progress we make towards virtue has its origin in grace, not in us. This is so in spite of the tune Augustine is always singing: 'What do you have that you have not received?' And 'if you have received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?'[1697] The same tune could be sung to someone boasting about riches, beauty, strength, famous ancestry, good health, mental dexterity, or success. And then if someone looks down on a woman, self-satisfied because he was born a male, couldn't those same words be thrown up to him, 'What do you have that you have not received?'? And so this saying of Paul does not exclude free will but rather represses the arrogance of a man who does not acknowledge that whatever he is and whatever good he has, if he has any at all, was given to him by God as a gift. The same point is made in 2 Corinthians 3[:5], through a distinction between the phrases 'by ourselves' and 'from ourselves': 'We are not capable,' he says, 'of thinking of anything by ourselves as if from ourselves, but rather all our capacity comes from God.' Even what we can do by our natural powers springs from us in such a way that it nevertheless comes from God, the fountain from which all

* * * * *

[1697] 1 Cor 4:7, a favourite proof-text of Augustine, who cites it at least thirty-one times in his anti-Pelagian work. See especially *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 5.9–10 PL 44 967–8 and *De correptione et gratia* 6.9–10 and 7.12 PL 44 920–3.

things flow. Time after time Augustine chants the phrase 'the will is prepared by the Lord,' but yet I have not yet discovered the place in Scripture from which he took it.[1698] But, unless I am mistaken, he also quotes a text from Proverbs 16[:1]: 'Man's part is to prepare his soul,'[1699] of which I have spoken elsewhere.[1700] From these two texts it follows that the will is simultaneously prepared both by God and man; and just as man's will and grace act together in a good work, in the same way they work together in the acquisition of grace, not because man acts in any way so as to create grace, but because he presents himself as capable of grace in proportion to his own ability. Now even though the word 'prepare' here means nothing different from 'help,' Augustine shies away from the word 'help' but embraces the word 'prepare'; and he does not accept the word 'helper' but does accept 'bestower,'[1701] as if someone who helps a feeble will to be truly good, so that whoever has it is blessed, does not bestow a good will. But Augustine, as I have said, means a sufficient or perfect will. And the other writer[1702] was talking about a good but imperfect intention, which would be rendered sufficient by the assistance of God's grace. And imperfect knowledge and imperfect will can have many gradations, since our faith and the will through which we are justified are not perfect in this life, and yet it is called a good will.

[*The virtues of the pagans and of the Old Testament Jews*]

But if someone should say that a person not yet reborn in the Spirit has no faith or knowledge of what pertains to piety, no good will, no righteousness, no virtue (no matter how imperfect), he is proposing something more paradoxical than all the paradoxes of the Stoics, since in the histories of the pagans we read of some examples of virtues such that they sometimes

* * * * *

[1698] In his anti-Pelagian writings Augustine cites this text at least twenty-eight times. See, for example, *Contra duos epistolas Pelagianorum* 1.18.36, 2.9.20, 4.6.13, 4.9.26 PL 44 567, 585, 618, 628. It is cited in each of the six books of *Contra secundam Iuliani responsionem imperfectum opus* PL 45 1050–1607. Augustine was following the Septuagint version of Prov 8:35: *ἑτοιμάζεται θέλησις παρὰ Κυρίου*.

[1699] Prov 16:1; see, for example, *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* 2.9.19–20 PL 44 585–6.

[1700] *A Discussion* CWE 76 63; also 601–2 above

[1701] See n1684 above.

[1702] That is, Augustine's Pelagian opponent, though at *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* 3.4.13 (PL 44 597), where Augustine makes this distinction, he refers to the Pelagians in general (*isti*) rightly put us Christians to shame, and in the books of the philosophers we find precepts so similar to those in the volumes of the prophets that some have tried to teach that they were taken from there. From such sources there arose among them certain good deeds which I grant did not merit or generate justifying grace but nevertheless rendered the mind more capable of receiving grace, as long as hypocrisy or reprobate perceptions did not get in the way; this is analogous to what the philosophers also say, that certain accidental forms make matter more capable of receiving the principal form.[1703] But if someone wants to ascribe also to grace whatever the gentiles either knew or performed, I have no objection as long as it is conceded that human free will got that far with the help of grace; if they had continued to progress in such knowledge and deeds, they would have attained eternal salvation through the same grace. For although Jerome in *To Ctesiphon* seems to think that everyone to whom the law of Moses was not available perished,[1704] nevertheless I find more probable the opinion of the person – whoever he was – who wrote *The Calling of the Gentiles*: that divine providence is not lacking in any era or to any kind of people.[1705] Thus, before the law of Moses was handed down it is clear that many were holy under the law of nature. But since the law of Moses was handed down to only one people, and there was no command to preach it throughout the whole world like the gospel but only to the posterity of that nation – although they did not turn away converts – it is binding only on those to whom it was handed down or on those who professed it of their own accord. And indeed the Pharisees are reproached in the Gospel because they travelled over land and sea to make a single convert who would be doubly damned to hell.[1706] Therefore, just as the law of nature did not justify but

* * * * *

[1703] For example, the 'accident' of proper quantitative extension in the foetus makes it more capable of receiving the substantial form of the soul. For the Aristotelian terminology (substance, accident, matter, form) see Simon Blackburn *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford and New York 1994) 4, 142, 234, 366.

[1704] Ep 133 *Ad Ctesiphontem adversus Pelagium* 9 PL 22 1157; as an extreme example of charges which seemingly could be brought against God for injustices in the Old Testament, Jerome mentions that a roommate of his, Porphyrius, raised the objection that everyone who did not have access to the law of Moses was damned. Jerome does not himself endorse the idea (or specifically reject it). Augustine discusses the problem in Ep 102 *Sex Quaestiones contra paganos* 2 (PL 33 373–6).

[1705] Pseudo-Ambrose *De vocatione omnium gentium* 19, 25, 29, 31, 33 PL 51 706, 710–11, 715–18

[1706] Matt 23:15

prepared for justification, so too, although the law of Moses did not confer perfect righteousness, it nevertheless prepared for it, in this way, if no other, that by fear it restrained the Jews from sinking into extreme wickedness. For a person whose wrongdoing is tempered by fear is more curable than someone who has thrown off all fear of God and shame before men, glorying and revelling in the worst vices. This, I think, is what Paul meant when he said he had laboured more than all the rest.[1707] For the Law had prepared the Jews for Christ, although it did not confer justification. For they already knew that there is one God, that the gods of the pagans were demons hostile to mankind, that there is no salvation except from God; the knowledge of these points and others like them made them more capable of receiving the gospel. But Paul had undertaken the harder task of instructing the gentiles, some of whom believed that there is no God, others that the gods are not concerned with the affairs of mortals; others had an extremely low opinion of the gods, thinking they are as they are portrayed in mythology; many thought that nothing was left of a person after the funeral pyre. And yet he found some among them who had sinned less grievously, that is, whose minds were less perverted, and the same thing happened among the Jews. Perversion, however, springs not from nature but from free will. For it is one thing to be perverted; another, to be mistaken. It is one thing to lack justification; another, to be wicked.

But Luther so exaggerates the corruption of nature that he puts it on a par with the malice of Satan,[1708] whereas Scripture says: 'God made the nations of the earth curable, and there is no deadly poison in them and no reign of hell on the earth. For justice is everlasting and immortal,' but injustice brings with it death. 'And the wicked have summoned it by their words and deeds.'[1709] Moreover, that the author is here speaking about sin chosen by the will and not original sin is clear from what follows: 'For the wicked say to themselves, thinking to themselves wrongly, etc.'[1710] Accordingly, just as we grant that human nature was corrupted by the sin of our first parents, so too it is clear that it has within it not inconsiderable seeds of virtue and piety. But if we make mankind totally wicked simply because they were born so, let us make the same mankind totally pious because a seed-plot of piety is inherent in them. In fact, the reason that more turn to vice than to virtue is not so much a corrupt nature as degenerate education,

* * * * *

[1707] 1 Cor 15:10
[1708] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 782:30–783:2 / LW 33 287–8
[1709] Wisd 1:14–16
[1710] Wisd 2:1

bad companionship; a further reason is that the enticements and rewards of vices are ready at hand, whereas virtue is a very difficult and burdensome undertaking, and its enticements are not immediately obvious. That is the reason many are more inclined to evil deeds. Now just as we grant that sin was known more fully through the law of Moses, so too it cannot be denied that the laws of the gentiles, most of which preceded Moses, punish many of the same crimes as are punished by the law of Moses. And so the law of nature also shows there is sin, and this knowledge generates a horror of sin. That this is true is clear from what the pagan poets write about the torments of conscience and the avenging Furies.[1711] But if the law of Moses has enough force to make us seek refuge, after we know our sins, by imploring God's help, what is there to keep the law of nature from impelling us to do the same, according to its own small measure? And if prayer prepares us for God's grace – as Luther also concedes – why should we be any less prepared for it by morally good works, among which, I think, prayer is included?

I do not care for these Stoic notions that whatever is done apart from grace is equally damnable,[1712] so that the tolerance of Socrates is no less grievous an offence in the sight of God than the cruelty of Nero. Granted that whatever is done without the gift of faith and charity and is not referred to God is not truly good, still, whatever does not conflict with faith and charity and makes an approach to them, as it were, can be called good in some sense. At the same time, imagine, if you will, gradations of faith and of charity which have not yet attained effective faith, which is only given by God. Imagine, if you will, a pagan philosopher who knows that there is one mind that created and governs all things, than which nothing better or greater can exist and from which all good flows forth, that rewards good deeds, that he acknowledges should be worshipped with purity of heart; but he tolerates the commonly accepted ceremonies, partly because he despairs of being able to bring the uncultivated crowd to believe anything else, partly because he believes it is to the advantage of the people to be restrained by such a religion until something better emerges, and in the meantime he admonishes those whom he thinks can be taught; he exerts himself to fulfil as well as he can his duties to his country, his parents, wife, and children, ignoring the ill will stirred up by virtue and hoping to be rewarded by that mind for his good deeds. That some of the pagans had such an attitude is testified by their own books. What then?

* * * * *

[1711] See n1055 above.

[1712] *De servo arbitrio* WA 18 779:11–30 / LW 33 281–2

Shall we say that such a person, when he is conducting himself extremely well, sins quite as much as if he got rid of his wife with poison and prostituted his children? At all events I think that such a person does not lack faith entirely and that his works do not stir up God's wrath but rather that he renders himself capable of receiving God's goodness and makes himself suited to it.

[*Augustine and congruous merit*]

Let us bring forward Augustine when he was not yet a Christian, but stood at the crossroads deliberating into which sect it would be most proper for him to be initiated. For he was a Manichaean not because he approved of that heresy but so that he would not seem to belong to no sect at all. He had his doubts about Christ. But his attitude was to join whichever he discovered to be best. To determine that, he listened to Ambrose, read Paul's epistles, discussed beatitude with his friends, prayed, gave alms, stayed away from the profane theatres, was horrified by disgraceful deeds, had a single concubine to whom he was conjugally faithful – which in a pagan was not considered to be an offence. While he was striving, as it were, for the Lord's grace by such deeds as these, shall we say that he stirred up God's wrath as much as if he had killed his mother with poison? How absurd! But if such morally good works, or whatever you want to call them, prepare a person for God's grace or if, as the scholastics say, they earn it by merit *de congruo*, what is absurd about this opinion?[1713] And if Augustine, through the power of free will, could listen to the sermons of Ambrose, read holy books, make contributions to the poor, make time for prayers and meditations, converse with pious men, and ask them to pray to the Lord for his salvation, what reason is there to hiss so vehemently at the opinion of the scholastics, according to which a person merits justifying grace *de congruo* through morally good works? We are frightened of verbal shadows, when in reality there is no absurdity. If someone should say that through such deeds a person can in some sense be prepared for grace, they would put up with it, I think; as it is, even though the same thing is meant by someone who says 'grace is merited *de congruo*,' they are offended.

What I have set forth about Augustine could also be said about someone quite taken up with many vices but who is nevertheless dissatisfied with himself and wishes that he might be endowed with a better attitude. For I have heard some people saying, 'Would that God would give me faith!

* * * * *

[1713] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 28–9 nn103–6.

Would that he would endow me with an upright will!' and I knew that their faith was not sincere and their life was disreputable. I replied to them, 'It is your part not merely to wish mildly for God's gift, but also to strive for it.' 'By what means?' they said. 'Read holy books, go to holy sermons, pray frequently, give money to the poor, ask pious men to pray for your salvation, little by little withdraw from vices as much as you can; if you do these things which are under your control, God's grace will not be wanting to you.' And I think that I gave pious advice. Whoever wishes for a holy will does not entirely lack it; and whoever wishes for the gift of faith does not entirely lack faith, but rather he wants his imperfect qualities to be perfected through the assistance of grace. Nor does it make much difference whether you say that these works are performed through free will or that they are done with the continual inspiration of particular grace, which advances but does not perfect. But in fact it is more plausible to profess that they are not devoid of the grace of God, who gradually advances the minuscule human power which is inadequate by itself. For you owe no less to someone who gave you at one stroke the capital to do business for a long time than you do to someone who bestows on you every day what is sufficient for that day. Moreover, someone is giving every day if he has it in his power to snatch away what he gave. For in this process the free gift of grace is not turned into an obligation, but rather the manner of giving is changed. And in this way grace is not given according to merit – a view detested even by the Pelagians – but care is taken to avoid seeming to give it to the unworthy. By the unworthy I do not mean those who have not merited, but those who refuse and turn away from God's gift. Moreover, there is no reason to fear that grace might seem to have its origin in natural power, since even that natural good, as I have often said, is a free gift of God, greater in some, smaller in others. Nor does a person automatically have something of his own to boast about, unless he wants to claim for himself what he has from another. And if there is so much danger of boasting, a person can also preen himself[1714] on the special gift of God, since what pious people have taught is true, that even in the midst of virtues vainglory lays its ambush. Finally, there is a risk that even what can be done by natural power might be snatched away, if it is used otherwise than it should be. Hence, just as we thank God for good bodily health and other benefits, it is fitting that we should thank him for these gifts, praying that by his inspiration he will perfect what is imperfect. And because in a certain sense someone

* * * * *

[1714] Literally, 'raise up his crest' (*Adagia* I viii 69) gives every day if he does not snatch away what he is able to snatch away, there is good reason for us always to be importunate with God, either by thanking him for what we have received or praying that he will preserve and augment what he has generously deigned to bestow on us. This sort of merit, then, does not block grace but causes a person to receive grace more fittingly and generously.

I go over and over these points to show that a large part of this controversy among the ancient Fathers had its origins in and was exacerbated by expressions not taken in a proper way. Jerome is outraged with Ctesiphon – although his anger seems to be a pretence – because he had written that a person could be saved if he wanted to be, but with the assistance of grace. Jerome himself says: 'To will and to run are mine, but this very thing of mine, without the continual help of God, is not mine.'[1715] The language is different; the meaning is the same. Finally, to handle this whole subject of the ways in which God's grace works in mankind leads to many profound issues which it is not necessary to examine with great thoroughness. It is clear that whatever we have derives entirely from the generosity of God. But to determine how he dispenses his munificent gifts to us – though it may be the subject of pious speculation – I certainly do not think it is necessary. And yet no other subject appeals so much to Augustine. I have shown that the opinion of the scholastics, which, among those views which have not been not rejected, allows most to free will, is not all that different from the opinion of Augustine, except that they differ in words rather than in meaning. Whenever the ancient Fathers mention merit, they mean that sort of merit which excludes grace, as when some one is motivated by great services performed for him to return the favour and would be ungrateful if he did not, or if someone pays a hired workman the wages due to his efforts. But a benefit is rightly withheld from anyone who neglects it, refuses it when it is offered, uses it badly after he has received it, or is ungrateful to the one who gave it to him. On the other hand, a person somehow merits if he accepts it readily, acknowledges the greatness of the benefit, uses it skilfully, is mindful of it, and proclaims it. For to have given or extended thanks to God, who does not need to exchange favours with anyone, is to have returned his favour.[1716] Similarly, since there are many types of righteousness and of good will

* * * * *

[1715] Epistola 133 *Ad Ctesiphontem adversus Pelagium* 8 PL 22 1160, 6 PL 22 1154

[1716] Latin 'Nam Deo, qui nullius eget mutua gratia, egisse gratias aut habuisse retulisse est.' The sentence is difficult to put into English because Latin *gratia* can mean 'grace,' 'thanks,' or 'favour.'

and faith, and because the ancient Fathers did not distinguish them with sufficient clarity, they did not always seem to have paid sufficient attention to what others said, and they were not very consistent themselves, so that, if you carefully compare and examine the individual parts of a disputation, you will notice that they sometimes say the same things as their opponents and that they do not always agree among themselves when they are dealing with the same issue – as, for example, it seems to Jerome absurd to say that God crowns his own good works, which he has performed in us,[1717] whereas in Augustine no opinion is more commonly repeated;[1718] sometimes in the same disquisition one part may not agree very well with another because they have not distinguished their terminology clearly enough.

But none of them is so hostile to free will that he does not attribute something to it. 'Just as Adam, who was created upright, was able to persevere in the good through free will, he fell because he chose not to stand. If he had willed to do so, it would have been his merit, not his guilt.' These are the words of Augustine in his book *Reproof and Grace*, chapter 11.[1719] He could have held out if he had willed to do so because God gave him assistance through which he could have persistently clung to whatever good he willed and without which he was unable to do so. But because he did not will to hold out, certainly the fault is his, just as the merit would have been his if he had willed to hold out. So too a person freed by grace can remain in the state of grace if he wills to do so, and if he perseveres he merits; if he does not will to do so, he is guilty of a sin. Here, at any rate, merit and guilt are ascribed to free will. For I do not think it is relevant to the issue to investigate whether Adam's natural gifts were supplemented with grace, without which he could not have persevered, and whether his natural gifts would have sufficed against all temptations, since he was immediately conquered by Satan's first assault. It is enough to hold that Adam in paradise was as he is described in Holy Scripture, even if we do not reply to all the curious questions always being asked.[1720] Free will, then, as Augustine

* * * * *

[1717] Ep 133 *Ad Ctesiphontem adversus Pelagium* 5–6 PL 22 1154

[1718] For example, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 6.15 PL 44 890–1

[1719] Erasmus paraphrases the first three sentences of *De correptione et gratia* 11.32 (PL 44 935). The Froben 1527 edition reads 2 instead of the correct 11 (which appears as XI in LB). The typesetter of the 1527 edition may have read 11 as the roman numeral II.

[1720] For example, Peter Lombard in *Sententiae* II dist 29 asks whether man before he sinned needed operating and cooperating grace and whether he had virtues before the fall (PL 192 719). Since the scholastic theologians usually wrote says, sufficed to do evil but had too little strength to do good unless it was assisted by an all-powerful good.[1721] He sets 'had too little strength' in contrast with 'sufficed.' And when he mentions the all-powerful good, he implies a certain human good that is feeble and needs the assistance of grace. But what is that good except what a person can achieve by his natural power? – not that he immediately becomes blessed but that he is more prepared for the grace of God. A person who understands much through human reason and believes certain truths about God, who has drunk in a love of wisdom from the books of the philosophers, who has striven for a habit of virtue according to his own small measure, is somewhat more capable than a crude soldier who has lived in a profound state of ignorance and the grossest vice and who never gave a thought to God. And so does a person have what he has not received? Not at all. But it does not follow that since he did not receive it as a gift but as a legacy, therefore he did not receive it.[1722] Likewise it does not follow that since he did not receive it in one way, therefore he did not receive it in any way. But if I wanted to indulge in sophistry, I could point out that it is not even true that free will suffices to do evil. For it would not suffice if it were deprived of the general motion of the first cause.[1723] Therefore, it receives the very power it has to will evil and commit sins. Since, therefore, there is inherent in mankind a certain inborn power that seeks virtue, even though it has been disabled by sin, this faculty is stirred up by various circumstances, one of which is the Law, which uses rewards to encourage right conduct and punishments to deter from wrongdoing and thus makes a person aware of his sin and dissatisfied with himself, even if the sin is secret, and on the other hand makes him rejoice if he is not in violation of the Law. But if the law of nature partly does what the law of God does and a certain beginning of good is attributed to this law when it makes sins known, it is not absurd to attribute this partial and incipient good to free will.

* * * * *

---

commentaries on this work, the questions about Adam's prelapsarian state multiplied. For example, Thomas Aquinas, commenting on *Sententiae* II dist 29, asks whether man in a state of innocence needed grace; whether he had it; if he had it, whether the grace of the human race would have been greater than it is if he had persisted in innocence, and whether human acts would have been more effective and meritorious.

[1721] *De correptione et gratia* 11.31 PL 44 935

[1722] That is, the reader of philosophical books owes his wisdom to the past; it is a legacy, not a gift of God's grace

[1723] See *A Discussion* CWE 76 31 nn111–12, 115.

Then again, if, once the gradations of grace have been distinguished, someone wants to give the name grace to every occasion that invites us to a better life, I will allow it, as long as it is also allowed to call our natural powers a grace. What example can you give of a person so brutalized by vice that if you ask him seriously whether he wants to be free from vice and dear to God, he will reply that he does not want to? And as Seneca writes, a large part of goodness is the will to be good.[1724] The further that will leaves imperfection behind, the closer a person is to grace. But if we grant that some will to goodness, however minuscule, springs from nature, it is not impious to say that a person's good intention, which is impotent in itself, is helped by the access of grace. Augustine grants that texts from 2 Paralipomenon 15[:2], 'The Lord is with you if you are with him' and 'if you seek him, you will find him; but if you abandon him, he will abandon you,' make it clear that free will exists, both for good and for bad. But he disagrees with his adversaries in that they say that our merit consists in our being with God and that the grace by which God in turn is also with us comes according to this merit; they say likewise that our merit consists in seeking him and that the grace of finding him is given according to this merit. There is a similar text in 1 Paralipomenon 28[:9]: 'If you seek him, he will be found by you; and if you send him away, he will reject you forever.' Augustine grants that from this text also free will is rightly inferred, but he will not put up with those who posit human merit here: 'If you seek him expecting a reward, he will be found by you.' This controversy seems to me to spring from words rather than facts. For if someone who is commanded to seek the Lord does not scorn impelling grace and accommodates his power to it, in some sense he makes himself worthy of more abundant grace, and it is not absurd to call this merit, not because it equals the benefit and turns grace into wages that are owed, but because it excludes unworthiness. But Augustine takes merit to mean wages. For he makes it clear that that is what he means when he says: 'And they work in every way as hard as they can to show that God's grace is given according to our merits, that is, that grace is not grace.'[1725] For there is a kind of merit which excludes grace and demands wages that are owed, like those of a workman who can sue you in court if you do not pay him his wages. If you pay him, no favour[1726] is owed on either side. According to this sense of the word, I think, they had pronounced an anathema against those who said that God's grace is given according to human merits.

* * * * *

[1724] *Epistulae morales* 34.3

[1725] Augustine discusses both texts in *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 5.11 (PL 44 888).

[1726] Latin *gratiam*

But while Augustine shudders too much at the notion that the beginning of grace should be attributed to free will, he does indeed grant that free will is consistent with God's commandments, as when John says, 'My dearest brothers, let us love one another.' But he denies that this does any good unless the one who commands adds a certain amount of love, so that when free will has been admonished by the commandment it seeks the gift of God.[1727] And so he seems to say that besides the grace which impels through the commandment the will needs a certain imperfect grace, which is infused by God, so that when this has been received the will seeks justifying grace, because John added in that passage, 'Love is from God.' But thus we go around in circles! For if someone has imperfect grace, he is not yet justified. How then will he seek justifying grace, since free will is not yet liberated? It does not follow automatically that justifying charity does not come from God, even if we grant that a person can have a certain kind of charity towards God through his natural power. Augustine says in his book *Reproof and Grace* addressed to Valentinian, 'To long for the assistance of grace is the beginning of grace.'[1728] But if we concede that even in vicious persons there is a certain longing for grace based on natural perceptions, once more there is a danger that the beginning of grace springs from free will; and that would be a quite abominable idea, if whatever free will can do is not poured forth by God as a gift. But if in those gradations by which we gradually leave a vicious habit behind and approach justification someone wants to add particular grace, I consider this a pious opinion. But I do not consider it compatible with Christian tranquillity to whip up melodramatic uproars over these tiny points. Maybe it would be better for everyone, according to Paul's saying, to have room up to a point to indulge in his own insights.[1729] When he struggles against the Pelagians to protect grace, Augustine attributes so little to free will as to grant it something in name more than in fact. Then again, when he locks horns with those who said that infants were not damned by the sin contracted from our first parents, he says that infants who died without baptism must burn in eternal fire.[1730] Later theologians tempered both opinions, attributing somewhat more to free will than he did, and distinguishing congruous merit from condign

* * * * *

[1727] 1 John 4:7; Augustine *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 18.37 PL 44 903–4

[1728] *De correptione et gratia* 1.2 PL 44 917

[1729] Rom 14:5; 'up to a point' (Latin *hactenus*) seems to mean 'up to the point where the church promulgates an official pronouncement.'

[1730] *Contra secundam Iuliani responsionem imperfectum opus* 2.117, 3.199 PL 45 1191, 1333, *Contra Iulianum* 5.11 PL 44 809 merit, acquired faith from infused faith, a perfect will from an imperfect one,[1731] and likewise mitigating the condemnation of infants by distinguishing the pain of loss from pain of the senses.[1732] And John Gerson does not seem to despair entirely of the salvation of infants if parents of extraordinary piety earnestly appeal to the kindness of God.[1733] Now what theologians think too restrained in Augustine's opinion about free will, Luther thinks excessive; he introduces the term 'necessity' – which Augustine constantly refrained from using – and he does not even grant free will the power to withdraw from grace, a power Augustine does not deny to it.

[*Erasmus' peroration: admonitions to all parties*]

But those who, with more piety than wisdom, do all they can to diminish natural powers in order to emphasize the greatness of grace seem to me to be acting exactly like someone who denies that anyone achieved salvation under either the law of Moses or the law of nature, in order

* * * * *

[1731] Erasmus has in mind the late scholastic teaching about congruous merit; see *A Discussion* CWE 76 28–9 nn103, 105–6.

[1732] Peter Lombard *Sententiae* II dist 33.5 PL 192 730; Thomas Aquinas *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* II dist 33 q 2 aa 1–2; Bonaventure *Commentaria in quatuor libros Sententiarum* II dist 33 a 3 qq 1–2; Scotus *Commentarium Oxoniense in quatuor libros Sententiarum* II dist 33 q 1. The pain of loss is the deprivation of the joys of heaven; this is suffered by unbaptized infants in limbo. The pain of the senses is inflicted on sinners in hell.

[1733] *Sermo de nativitate gloriosae Virginis Mariae* consideratio 2: 'Debent igitur mulieres praegnantes, similiter & viri sui per se et alios diligentius preces fundere Deo, & ad sanctos angelos custodes hominum, etiam puerorum in utero; debent ad ceteros Sanctos Sanctasque omnes confugere, quatenus infans nondum natus, si forte moriturus est priusquam ad Baptismi fluminis gratiam pervenire valeat, dignetur ipsum Dominus Jesus summus Pontifex Baptismo Spiritus sancti preveniendo misericorditer consecrare. Quis enim scit, si forte exaudiat Deus, imo quis non devotius sperare valeat, quod orationem humilium & in se sperantium nequaquam despiciat? ... Sed neque absque revelatione datur, fateor, certitudo' ('Therefore pregnant women and also their husbands, on their own and through others, ought to diligently pour forth their prayers to God and to the guardian angels on behalf of the child in the womb. They ought to fly to the refuge of the other saints, both men and women, so that the unborn infant, if it should happen to die before reaching the grace of the waters of baptism, might mercifully be consecrated by the high priest, our Lord Jesus, with an anticipatory baptism of the Holy Spirit. For who knows whether God hears, indeed who cannot devoutly hope that he will never scorn the prayers of the humble who place their hope in him? ... But, short of a revelation, there is not, I think, any certainty about it'). See Jean Gerson *Opera omnia* ed Louis Ellies du Pin, 5 vols (Antwerp 1706) III 1350.

to magnify the glory of Christ's coming and refute those who are in the habit of saying, 'What new contribution did Christ make?' And at the same time they do not notice that the means of salvation for people before the gospel emerged were also a gift coming from Christ, who in his goodness will not fail anyone, although, according to the dispensation of the divine counsel, he communicates himself in different ways according to the variety of persons and times. And if they were so set on exaggeration, they should have avoided appearing to agree with the Manichaeans: they should have exaggerated the human folly and wickedness to which people had demeaned themselves through free will rather than nature corrupted by Adam's sin.

But if someone favours the opinion of those who are closest to the ditch of Manichaeism, he should be careful not to go closer and fall into the abyss, and he should attribute man's entire salvation to grace in such a way as to remember that the human will, once it is liberated, acts together with the action of grace and by so acting makes progress, not in such a way that grace is owed to it but that it not be withdrawn because of unworthiness. Let him also remember that a person has it in his power to make himself available to impelling grace, that is, not to turn away. And God in his goodness accepts this very deed so as to consider that person worthy of more abundant grace. Let him remember that man can choose either to persevere in grace or to abandon it. Anyone who grants this will not accept the absolute necessity of all things. Finally, let him remember that natural gifts are also ours by the grace of God, so that there is nothing a person can boast of as if he had achieved something good without God's grace; and let him dispense with similes such as clay, a saw, or an axe, for these comparisons were not adduced in order to exclude human free will but to show that the whole person is in God's control, even if God should wish to annihilate him.

Then again, those who favour the opinion of the moderns,[1734] since they are not far from the ditch of the Pelagians, should take care that they do not go any further forward, but rather let them remember how execrable it is in the sight of God for a person to rely on his own powers and boast about himself, since whoever boasts should do so about no one other than the Lord.[1735] Let them remember that they owe God thanks even for what they can perform by their natural powers, and that, if God accepts any such

* * * * *

1734 Having rebuked Luther, he turns to the contemporary theologians of the *via moderna*.

1735 Cf 1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17.

works, he does so not out of his justice but out of his immense kindness, making allowances for our imperfection. Finally, let them remember that even those natural powers are justly taken away by God if anyone abuses them or claims them for himself. They should not deceive themselves because of terms like 'freedom,' 'merit,' 'worthy,' 'condign,' 'congruous,' or 'debt,' since the essence of the whole process is owed to the gratuitous kindness of God, but rather they should strive for grace all the more diligently, and they should strive all the more zealously to do pious works, according to their awareness of the strength God has given to them for that very purpose.

Furthermore, if someone thinks Augustine is unfair to free will and the moderns more generous than is proper, let him proceed safely along the middle way and let him believe that, even in those steps by which (as I have said) we are prepared for grace, we are not without particular grace, so that for every one of us and in every respect, according to the tiny measure of our progress, free will cooperates with grace and grace with free will.

In brief, we should devote our efforts to obtaining God's grace rather than to indulging in fine-spun disputations about how grace works in us. For through such excessively subtle wars of words we would lose God's grace rather than fully understand by what means grace works in us, especially since God, whose ways are everywhere beyond our full comprehension, reveals his power among his creatures in such various ways. Now, just as I grant that those who overemphasized the power of grace and diminished the power of nature are driven by good reasons, so too those who did not allow anyone to be saved or to perish unless they merit it in some way or other are moved by reasons which are not trivial. Although their opinions disagree, nevertheless, since they both flow from the same spring of piety, it is fitting to interpret them kindly, not brusquely, and to bring them into harmony – or at least for the time being to be harmonious where there is no disharmony. For they agree in these points: man is saved through mercy; no one is damned unjustly; God's grace is not lacking to anyone; a person should exert himself to do the best he can, but still, whatever good is in us should be ascribed entirely to the goodness of God.

Furthermore, without too much trouble we will bring into harmony scriptural passages that on the surface seem inconsistent with one another if we distinguish the meanings of words – as I have shown – and if we consider that in saving or damning people God acts according to various rationales, and that what we read he did in one case or another, according to his administrative plan, he does not automatically do in all cases, as, for example, when it is said that he 'deceived the prophet' or seduced the people or turned the heart of a wicked king in one direction or another.[1736] For when God sometimes offers an occasion of sinning to a wicked will or presents to a pious will an opportunity of doing good, that does not hinder free will, no more than a counsellor who points out what ought to be done. Thus, when Paul was thinking of setting out for Bithynia the Spirit hindered him, ordering him to go in a different direction.[1737] And in 2 Corinthians 8[:16] Paul also speaks as follows: 'I thank God who put into Titus' heart the same solicitude for you.' For Titus willed in general to do good, and in this affair God showed him what he should do. But that does not make it necessary for us to think that a person can never discern for himself what he should do. What we read in Esdras 1 is similar: 'Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, who put this will into the heart of the king to make his dwelling famous in Jerusalem.'[1738] I think Artaxerxes did not have the Spirit, and yet God turned his heart to allow the temple to be restored. Relevant here also is that text about Shimei, whom 'the Lord ordered to curse David,'[1739] using a man of evil will to censure a righteous man. Such incidents, which have particular causes, ought not to lead to a general conclusion. Then again, if God seizes to himself some people with a sudden and violent movement, as he did Paul,[1740] we should not fashion a universal dogma from such instances. Some he calls out of the depths of ignorance and a cesspool[1741] of grave sins; others he allows to pursue, as it were, God's gift for a long time.

But if we cannot by reason entirely understand to what degree, by what means, by what gradations he works in us, certainly let us speak in the manner of Scripture and of the holy Fathers. But what does Scripture say? It does not say: 'All human endeavour is in vain; it does not make any difference how you live; God will either save you if he determines to do so or will damn you if he decides to do so.' Rather it speaks in this way: 'Turn to me and I will turn to you'; and 'Convert under my correction'; 'Come to me all of you'; 'Struggle to enter by the narrow gate'; 'Be sober and keep watch'; 'Transgressors, return to your senses'; 'Give alms'; 'Forgive and you will be forgiven'; 'Give judgment in favour of the orphan'; 'Help

* * * * *

[1736] See the discussion of Ezek 14:9 and similar texts 470–88 above.

[1737] Acts 16:7–8

[1738] 1 Esdras 7:27. The Froben 1527 edition and LB have 'Esdrae 3,' an error on the part of Erasmus or the typesetter. There are only two books of Esdras.

[1739] 2 Kings 16:10

[1740] Acts 9:3–9

[1741] Literally, 'a Lernean swamp'; *Adagia* I iii 27 the poor.'[1742] In such language as this let us exhort each other to penance and mutual charity, abandoning 'evil conversations, which corrupt good morals.'[1743] Let brother say to brother, 'Let us love one another';[1744] let us change for the better if we have sinned through ignorance; let us strive for God's grace by pious works. And in our private capacity let us adapt both Scripture and our speech to the needs of our neighbour. We should speak in one way to a haughty, arrogant, self-satisfied person, who holds his head high against God, and in quite a different way to someone who is faint-hearted and near to despair. To the one let us present scriptural texts that show how a person can do nothing by his own power and how dangerous it is for a man to rely on his own forces. To the other let us produce texts that show how much a person can also do for himself if he decides to try and how God's kindness is always in readiness for anyone who does his best. But since Scripture sometimes addresses one group, sometimes the other, it should be interpreted according to the character of those who are being addressed. Otherwise it will seem to contradict itself in many places, whereas in fact nothing could be more self-consistent than Scripture.

In bringing this volume to an end, I will not deprecate the reader's judgment and demand his obedient assent, as Luther did, but rather I will submit my discourse to the Catholic church, ready to make a correction wherever I might have wandered or diverged from the truth. And so may Christ enlighten us all, together with Luther, so that all of us, with one mouth, one mind, one opinion, may extol the Lord we have in common, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

* * * * *

[1742] Zach 1:3; Prov 1:23; Matt 11:28; Luke 13:24; 1 Peter 5:8; Isa 46:8; Luke 12:33; Luke 6:37 ('remittite et remittetur vobis' in Erasmus' New Testament rather than 'demittite et demittetur' in the Vulgate); Isa 1:17

[1743] 1 Cor 15:33

[1744] 1 John 4:7

This page intentionally left blank

WORKS FREQUENTLY CITED

SHORT-TITLE FORMS FOR ERASMUS' WORKS

INDEX OF SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

GENERAL INDEX

WORKS FREQUENTLY CITED

This list provides bibliographical information for publications refered to in short-title form in introductions and notes. For Erasmus' writings see the short-title list following.

Allen	*Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami* ed P.S. Allen, H.M. Allen, and H.W. Garrod (Oxford 1906–58) 11 vols and index
ASD	*Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* (Amsterdam 1969–)
Assertio	*Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheri per bullam Leonis* X *novissimam damnatorum* in WA 7 91–151
Bernard *Tractatus*	Bernard of Clairvaux *Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio* in *Sancti Bernardi opera* ed J. Leclercq and H.M. Rochais, 8 vols (Rome 1957–77) III 165–203. English translation in *Treatises* *III: On Grace and Free Choice* ... trans Daniel O'Donovan with an introduction by Bernard McGinn, The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux 7, Cistercian Fathers Series 19 (Kalamazoo, MI 1977)
CCSL	*Corpus christianorum, series Latina* (Turnhout 1953–)
CEBR	*Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation* ed P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher (Toronto 1985–7) 3 vols
Courtenay 'Covenant'	William J. Courtenay 'Covenant and Causality in Pierre d'Ailly' *Speculum* 46 (1971) 94–119
CSEL	*Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna 1866–)
CWE	*Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto 1974–)
De libero arbitrio	Erasmus *De libero arbitrio* διατριβή *sive collatio* ed Johannes von Walter, Quellenschriften zur Geschichte des Protestantismus 8 (Leipzig 1910)
De servo arbitrio	Martin Luther *De servo arbitrio* in WA 18 600–787
A Discussion	Erasmus *De libero arbitrio* διατριβή *sive collatio*. References in the notes are to the translation by Peter Macardle in CWE 76 1–89.

Hyperaspistes 1	Erasmus *Hyperaspistes Diatribae adversus Servum arbitrium Martini Lutheri liber primus* LB X 1249–1336. References in the notes are to the translation by Clarence H. Miller in CWE 76 91–297.
Hyperaspistes 2	Erasmus *Hyperaspistes Diatribae adversus Servum arbitrium Martini Lutheri liber secundus* LB X 1337–1536
LB	Erasmus *Opera omnia* ed Jean Leclerc (Leiden 1703–6; repr Hildesheim 1961–2) 10 vols
LW	*Luther's Works* ed Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann, et al (Philadelphia 1958–) 55 vols
LW 33	Luther *The Bondage of the Will* trans Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia 1972)
Martin Luthers Antwort	Martin Luther *Auf des konigs zu Engelland lesterschrift titel Martin Luthers Antwort* in WA 23 17–37
McSorley	Harry J. McSorley CSP *Luther: Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical-Theological Study of Luther's Major Work, The Bondage of the Will* (New York and Minneapolis 1969)
Oberman *Harvest*	Heiko A. Oberman *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (Cambridge, MA 1963; repr Grand Rapids 1967 and Durham, NC 1983)
Oberman *Luther*	Heiko A. Oberman *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* trans E. Wallisers Schwartzbart (New Haven 1982) from *Luther: Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel* (Berlin 1992)
Otto	August Otto *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer* (Leipzig 1890; repr Hildesheim 1968)
PG	*Patrologiae cursus completus ... series Graeca* ed J.-P. Migne (Paris 1857–1912) 162 vols
PL	*Patrologiae cursus completus ... series Latina* ed J.-P. Migne (Paris 1844–1902) 221 vols
Rummel *Catholic Critics*	Erika Rummel *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics* (Nieuwkoop 1989) 2 vols
Seitz *Leipziger Disputation*	Otto Seitz ed *Der authentische Text der Leipziger Disputation (1519)* (Berlin 1903)

WA	*D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar 1883–)
WA *Briefwechsel*	*D. Martin Luthers Werke, Briefwechsel* (Weimar 1930–)
Walter	Erasmus *De libero arbitrio διατριβή sive collatio* ed Johannes von Walter, Quellenschiften zur Geschichte des Protestantismus 8 (Leipzig 1910)
Watson	Philip S. Watson, translator of Luther's *De servo arbitrio* into English (see LW 33 above)

SHORT-TITLE FORMS FOR ERASMUS' WORKS

Titles following colons are longer versions of the same, or are alternative titles. Items entirely enclosed in square brackets are of doubtful authorship. For abbreviations, see Works Frequently Cited.

Acta: Acta Academiae Lovaniensis contra Lutherum *Opuscula* / CWE 71
Adagia: Adagiorum chiliades 1508, etc (Adagiorum collectanea for the primitive form, when required) LB II / ASD II-1, 4, 5, 6 / CWE 30–6
Admonitio adversus mendacium: Admonitio adversus mendacium et obtrectationem LB X
Annotationes in Novum Testamentum LB VI / CWE 51–60
Antibarbari LB X / ASD I-1 / CWE 23
Apologia ad Caranzam: Apologia ad Sanctium Caranzam, or Apologia de tribus locis, or Responsio ad annotationem Stunicae ... a Sanctio Caranza defensam LB IX
Apologia ad Fabrum: Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem LB IX / ASD IX-3 / CWE 83
Apologia adversus monachos: Apologia adversus monachos quosdam Hispanos LB IX
Apologia adversus Petrum Sutorem: Apologia adversus debacchationes Petri Sutoris LB IX
Apologia adversus rhapsodias Alberti Pii: Apologia ad viginti et quattuor libros A. Pii LB IX
Apologia contra Latomi dialogum: Apologia contra Iacobi Latomi dialogum de tribus linguis LB IX / CWE 71
Apologia de 'In principio erat sermo' LB IX
Apologia de laude matrimonii: Apologia pro declamatione de laude matrimonii LB IX / CWE 71
Apologia de loco 'Omnes quidem': Apologia de loco 'Omnes quidem resurgemus' LB IX
Apologiae contra Stunicam: Apologiae contra Lopidem Stunicam LB IX / ASD IX-2
Apologia qua respondet invectivis Lei: Apologia qua respondet duabus invectivis Eduardi Lei *Opuscula*
Apophthegmata LB IV
Appendix de scriptis Clithovei LB IX / CWE 83
Appendix respondens ad Sutorem LB IX
Argumenta: Argumenta in omnes epistolas apostolicas nova (with Paraphrases)
Axiomata pro causa Lutheri: Axiomata pro causa Martini Lutheri *Opuscula* / CWE 71

Carmina LB I, IV, V, VIII / ASD I-7 / CWE 85–6
Catalogus lucubrationum LB I
Ciceronianus: Dialogus Ciceronianus LB I / ASD I-2 / CWE 28
Colloquia LB I / ASD I-3 / CWE 39–40
Compendium vitae Allen I / CWE 4
Concionalis interpretatio (in Psalmi)
Conflictus: Conflictus Thaliae et Barbariei LB I

[Consilium: Consilium cuiusdam ex animo cupientis esse consultum] *Opuscula* / CWE 71

De bello Turcico: Consultatio de bello Turcico (in Psalmi)
De civilitate: De civilitate morum puerilium LB I / CWE 25
Declamatio de morte LB IV
Declamatiuncula LB IV
Declarationes ad censuras Lutetiae vulgatas: Declarationes ad censuras Lutetiae vulgatas sub nomine facultatis theologiae Parisiensis LB IX
De concordia: De sarcienda ecclesiae concordia, or De amabili ecclesiae concordia (in Psalmi)
De conscribendis epistolis LB I / ASD I-2 / CWE 25
De constructione: De constructione octo partium orationis, or Syntaxis LB I / ASD I-4
De contemptu mundi: Epistola de contemptu mundi LB V / ASD V-1 / CWE 66
De copia: De duplici copia verborum ac rerum LB I / ASD I-6 / CWE 24
De esu carnium: Epistola apologetica ad Christophorum episcopum Basiliensem de interdicto esu carnium LB IX / ASD IX-1
De immensa Dei misericordia: Concio de immensa Dei misericordia LB V / CWE 70
De libero arbitrio: De libero arbitrio diatribe LB IX / CWE 76
De praeparatione: De praeparatione ad mortem LB V / ASD V-1 / CWE 70
De pueris instituendis: De pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis LB I / ASD I-2 / CWE 26
De puero Iesu: Concio de puero Iesu LB V / CWE 29
De puritate tabernaculi: De puritate tabernaculi sive ecclesiae christianae (in Psalmi)
De ratione studii LB I / ASD I-2 / CWE 24
De recta pronuntiatione: De recta latini graecique sermonis pronuntiatione LB I / ASD I-4 / CWE 26
De taedio Iesu: Disputatiuncula de taedio, pavore, tristicia Iesu LB V / CWE 70
Detectio praestigiarum: Detectio praestigiarum cuiusdam libelli germanice scripti LB X / ASD IX-1
De vidua christiana LB V / CWE 66
De virtute amplectenda: Oratio de virtute amplectenda LB V / CWE 29
[Dialogus bilinguium ac trilinguium: Chonradi Nastadiensis dialogus bilinguium ac trilinguium] *Opuscula* / CWE 7
Dilutio: Dilutio eorum quae Iodocus Clithoveus scripsit adversus declamationem suasoriam matrimonii CWE 83
Divinationes ad notata Bedae LB IX

Ecclesiastes: Ecclesiastes sive de ratione concionandi LB V / ASD V-4, 5
Elenchus in N. Bedae censuras LB IX
Enchiridion: Enchiridion militis christiani LB V / CWE 66
Encomium matrimonii (in De conscribendis epistolis)
Encomium medicinae: Declamatio in laudem artis medicae LB I / ASD I-4 / CWE 29
Epistola ad Dorpium LB IX / CWE 3 / CWE 71
Epistola ad fratres Inferioris Germaniae: Responsio ad fratres Germaniae Inferioris ad epistolam apologeticam incerto autore proditam LB X / ASD IX-1

Epistola ad graculos: Epistola ad quosdam imprudentissimos graculos LB X
Epistola apologetica de Termino LB X
Epistola consolatoria: Epistola consolatoria virginibus sacris, or Epistola consolatoria in adversis LB V / CWE 69
Epistola contra pseudevangelicos: Epistola contra quosdam qui se falso iactant evangelicos LB X / ASD IX-1
Euripidis Hecuba LB I / ASD I-1
Euripidis Iphigenia in Aulide LB I / ASD I-1
Exomologesis: Exomologesis sive modus confitendi LB V
Explanatio symboli: Explanatio symboli apostolorum sive catechismus LB V / ASD V-1 / CWE 70
Ex Plutarcho versa LB IV / ASD IV-2

Formula: Conficiendarum epistolarum formula (see De conscribendis epistolis)

Hyperaspistes LB X / CWE 76–7

In Nucem Ovidii commentarius LB I / ASD I-1 / CWE 29
In Prudentium: Commentarius in duos hymnos Prudentii LB V / CWE 29
Institutio christiani matrimonii LB V / CWE 69
Institutio principis christiani LB IV / ASD IV-1 / CWE 27

[Julius exclusus: Dialogus Julius exclusus e coelis] *Opuscula* / CWE 27

Lingua LB IV / ASD IV-1A / CWE 29
Liturgia Virginis Matris: Virginis Matris apud Lauretum cultae liturgia LB V / ASD V-1 / CWE 69
Luciani dialogi LB I / ASD I-1

Manifesta mendacia CWE 71
Methodus (see Ratio)
Modus orandi Deum LB V / ASD V-1 / CWE 70
Moria: Moriae encomium LB IV / ASD IV-3 / CWE 27

Novum Testamentum: Novum Testamentum 1519 and later (Novum instrumentum for the first edition, 1516, when required) LB VI

Obsecratio ad Virginem Mariam: Obsecratio sive oratio ad Virginem Mariam in rebus adversis LB V / CWE 69
Oratio de pace: Oratio de pace et discordia LB VIII
Oratio funebris: Oratio funebris in funere Bertae de Heyen LB VIII / CWE 29

Paean Virgini Matri: Paean Virgini Matri dicendus LB V / CWE 69
Panegyricus: Panegyricus ad Philippum Austriae ducem LB IV / ASD IV-1 / CWE 27
Parabolae: Parabolae sive similia LB I / ASD I-5 / CWE 23
Paraclesis LB V, VI
Paraphrasis in Elegantias Vallae: Paraphrasis in Elegantias Laurentii Vallae LB I / ASD I-4

Paraphrasis in Matthaeum, etc (in Paraphrasis in Novum Testamentum)
Paraphrasis in Novum Testamentum LB VII / CWE 42–50
Peregrinatio apostolorum: Peregrinatio apostolorum Petri et Pauli LB VI, VII
Precatio ad Virginis filium Iesum LB V / CWE 69
Precatio dominica LB V / CWE 69
Precationes: Precationes aliquot novae LB V / CWE 69
Precatio pro pace ecclesiae: Precatio ad Dominum Iesum pro pace ecclesiae LB IV, V / CWE 69
Psalmi: Psalmi, or Enarrationes sive commentarii in psalmos LB V / ASD V-2, 3 / CWE 63–5
Purgatio adversus epistolam Lutheri: Purgatio adversus epistolam non sobriam Lutheri LB X / ASD IX-1

Querela pacis LB IV / ASD IV-2 / CWE 27

Ratio: Ratio seu Methodus compendio perveniendi ad veram theologiam (Methodus for the shorter version originally published in the Novum instrumentum of 1516) LB V, VI
Responsio ad annotationes Lei: Liber quo respondet annotationibus Lei LB IX
Responsio ad collationes: Responsio ad collationes cuiusdam iuvenis gerontodidascali LB IX
Responsio ad disputationem de divortio: Responsio ad disputationem cuiusdam Phimostomi de divortio LB IX / CWE 83
Responsio ad epistolam Pii: Responsio ad epistolam paraeneticam Alberti Pii, or Responsio ad exhortationem Pii LB IX
Responsio ad notulas Bedaicas LB X
Responsio ad Petri Cursii defensionem: Epistola de apologia Cursii LB X / Allen Ep 3032
Responsio adversus febricitantis libellum: Apologia monasticae religionis LB X

Spongia: Spongia adversus aspergines Hutteni LB X / ASD IX-1
Supputatio: Supputatio calumniarum Natalis Bedae LB IX

Tyrannicida: Tyrannicida, declamatio Lucianicae respondens LB I / ASD I-1 / CWE 29

Virginis et martyris comparatio LB V / CWE 69
Vita Hieronymi: Vita divi Hieronymi Stridonensis *Opuscula* / CWE 61

Index of Scriptural References

References in this index are identified according to the Vulgate order and numbering. On the use of Scripture in the controversy concerning free will see also the tables of divisions and correspondences in Erasmus' *Discussion of Free Will*, Luther's *The Enslaved Will*, and Erasmus' *Hyperaspistes* in CWE 76 312–21.

Genesis 168 n390, 232
1 346, 599
1:1 168 n390, 220 n676
1:26 83 n389, 169 n390
1:28 209 n613
1:31 47 n213
2 346
2:2 441 n438
2:16–17 25 n85
2:17 33 n127, 348 n52
4:6–7 33–4
4:7 386, 387 n181
5:27 121 n137
6:1–3 571 n957
6:2 572 n959
6:3 59–60, 303, 566–74
6:5 59, 303, 572 n960, 574–6
6:8–9 59 n275
6:9–9:28 570 n950
6:11 572 n960
6:13 572 n961
6:19 574–5
7:17–18 246 n813
8:21 59, 303, 573 n962, 574–6, 574 n973
9:12 573 n962
17:4–5 530 n763
22:13 207 n600
25:1–4 528 n753
25:23 53, 520–48, 545 n837
27:22 104 n49
27:25–9 542 n828
32:12 526 n747
32:24–31 526 n747
50:20 306 n7

Exodus
3:19–20 486 n600
4:21 455 n489
7:3 486 n600
8:15 457
8:24 420 n342
9:12 46, 447, 473 n557, 480 n577
9:12–16 449 n466
9:16 46, 47 n212, 305, 487 n600, 532 n775
9:18 502 n648
9:27 281 n1004
10:1–2 455 n489
18:13–27 713 n1626
20:5–6 408 n282
20:13 25 n86
20:13–17 387 n184
20:14 26 n88, 273 n966
20:14–16 702 n1577

21:12 25 n87
32–3 532 n772
32:9 36 n143
32:19–30 528 n756
33:19 46, 448, 532 n770

Leviticus
19:19 563 n911
20:10 26 n89

Numbers
22:7–21 593 n1058
22:21–35 66 n322
23:4–24:10 51 n228
23:10 376, 395
24:5–27 305
24:9 551 n857

Deuteronomy
4:24 551 n859
5:17 25 n86
5:18 26 n88
5:32 75 n365
6:4 563 n911
17:8–13 216
19 366
22:23–4 26 n89
27:26 667 n1421
30 391
30:10 38 n150
30:11–14 10 n25, 37, 416–19
30:15 387 n187
30:15–19 34, 388 n189
30:19 33 n127, 387 n187
33:21 58 n267, 75 n363

Joshua
1:7 75 n365

Judges
7:22 378 n143

1 Kings
10:1–8 540 n816
11:3 121 n138
16:10–11 477 n569
18:7 447 n458

2 Kings
8:15 75 n363
11:1–21 531 n768
11:2–12:14 568 n941
12:10 38
12:13 38 n156
16:10 477 n569, 748 n1739

3 Kings
2:4 75 n364
3:6 75 n364
8:23 75 n364, 365
8:25 75 n364
8:39 126 n164, 138 n230
18:17–30 202 n572
18:25–7 306 n10
19:18 555 n877

4 Kings
1:8–15 61 n290
20:1 38
20:1–6 504 n654
20:3 365 n104
20:5 38 n155
22:2 75 n365

1 Paralipomenon (1 Chronicles)
28:9 743

2 Paralipomenon (2 Chronicles)
6:14 75 n364
15:2 743

1 Esdras 22, 292–3
7:27 748 n1738

2 Esdras 22, 292

Judith 22, 292

Esther 22, 292, 344

Job 537 n795
25:5 664 n1404
34:30 64

Psalms 427
1:2 385 n169

1:3 362
2:8 563 n913
4:7 24 n80, 236 n760, 272 n953, 276
5:7 58 n268
5:8 464 n523
5:9 63 n301
5:11 652 n1346
5:12 652 n1347
5:19 601 n1087
6:8 462 n512
7:10 126 n161
8:4 462 n512
9:10 241 n789
(10):7 653 n1350
(10):17 653 n1351
13 654 n1363
13:1 105 n57, 125 n160, 655 n1368, 655 n1369
13:1–3 651 n1338
13:1–4 652
13:3 370, 370 n119, 650 n1332, 652–3, 655 n1368
13:7 405 n260
17 237
17:8–17 236 n760
17:10 233 n745
17:12 233 nn746–7
18:3 233 n743
18:4 133 n206
18:8 362 n93
18:9 217
18(17):10 462 n512
19 237
20 237
21:7 65 n314
22 405 n261
27:3 58 n268
31:2 679 n1476
31:9 385 n169
32:9 477 n570
33:13–14 37 n147
33:15 36 n137
35:2 653 n1352
35:4 385 n169, 440 n435
35:8 653 n1353
41:8 233 n742
50:11 57 n260
50:12 57 nn258–9
50:16 57 n261
52 654 n1363
52:1 105 n57, 125 n160
52:4 656 n1377
57:5–6 536 n789
63:5 277 n980
66:3 233 n745
67:36 714 n1631
68:14 464 n523
72:23 189 nn494–5
80:14 37 n146
81:6 61 n294, 450 n471
88:33 47
90:13 97 n1
91:3 233 n745
95:5 450 n471
103:6 233 n745
105:3 58 n267, 75 n363
109:1 563 n913
110:10 732 n1693
113:17–19 96 n1
114:7 405 n261
118:1 579 n990
118:9 362 n93
118:10 365 n103, 651 n1336
118:36 63 n302, 601 n1087
118:50 362 n93
118:105 24 n81, 217, 362 n93
118:130 217
118:137 464 n523
118:172 362 n93
125:1 405 n260
126:1 66 n320, 502 n649, 619 n1183
138:4 305
139:4 652 n1348
139:14 652 n1349
144:14 370
146:5 464 n523
155:11 691 n1530

Proverbs 22, 292, 293
1:8 385 n169
1:23 749 n1742
3:7 385 n169, 565 n925

3:11 385 n169
3:12 457 n495
3:27 385 n169
3:29 385 n169
4:27 75 n365
6:23–4 362 n94
8:31 570 n951
8:35 734 n1698
10:19 284 n1028
13:14 362 n94
16:1 305, 601–5, 734
16:1–6 63
16:2 602 n1094
16:3 602 n1095, 604 n1107
16:4 305, 468 n540, 604 n1105
16:9 305
21:1 63, 305, 605
26:11 341 n21

Ecclesiastes
3:7 174 n420
7:30 348 n50
11:6 603 n1100
15:21 348 n50

Song of Solomon 22, 292, 293
1:3 67

The Wisdom of Solomon
1:14 348 n50
1:14–16 736 n1709
2:1 736 n1710
9:10 73 n359

Ecclesiasticus 292, 293
1:16 732 n1693
3:33 705 n1590
15:11–14 348 n49
15:11–22 344–51, 374–86
15:14–18 21–3, 33 n126, 343, 348 n50
15:15 26 n98
15:16 58 n263, 345 n38, 353 n68, 368 n110, 383 n163
15:16–17 26 n99
15:17 72 n353
15:21 43
22:6 175 n427
44–50 45 n200
47:7 447 n458

Isaiah 235, 239, 675
1:4 505 n661
1:16–18 425 n365
1:17 749 n1742
1:18 505 n665
1:19 398 n226
1:19–20 34
3:4 64
5:3 187 n487
8:20 217
10:15 56, 565 n923
10:22 529 n759, 555 n875
11:4 566
21:12 35, 400 n239
30:15 36 n142
30:27 566
38:1–6 504 n654
38:3 75 n364
39:5–6 597
40:1–2 585 n1023
40:2 60, 304, 574, 576
40:5 354 n70, 577 n980, 597 n1072
40:6 xciv, 585 n1020, 597 n1072
40:6–7 581–5
40:6–8 60, 574, 583 n1013, 585 n1022
40:13 9 n20, 548 n851
40:13–14 134 n212
40:24 597 n1073
41:23 306
42:3 20 n63
45:9 54, 548 n848
45:20 35, 400
45:22 35 n131, 400, 401 n242
46:8 36 n140, 749 n1742
46:10 498 n630
52:1–2 35
52:2 57 n261
52:2–3 400 n238

56:10–11 183 n473
58:1–4 425 n362
58:2 424, 425 n361
59:7 654 n1360
59:7–8 653 n1354
61:1 396
63:17 47
63:18 47 n210
65:1 682 n1487
65:1–2 683 n1489
66:23 370

Jeremiah
10:22–3 62 n299, 598–601, 598 n1075
10:23 304
15:19 35, 404 n256, 405 n262
18:6 54, 548 n848
18:8 38
18:10 38
18:20 55 n248
20:7 47, 449 n466
26:3–4 36 n141
48:10 632 n1255

Lamentations
4:1 163 n362

Ezekiel 232
11:19 56–7, 565 n926
14:9 473 n557, 477 n571, 748 n1736
18:3 405 n264
18:21 36 n142
18:21–2 35, 405
18:21–3 405 n264
18:23 407 n272
18:24 35 n133
18:25–9 187
18:31 57 n259, 58 n264, 412 n298
18:31–2 35 n135
18:32 405 n264, 407 n272
20:13 36 n142
33:11 412 n298, 693 n1540
33:12 36 n142
33:16 36 n142
33:19 36 n142
34:1–10 183 n472
47:5 233 n744

Daniel 22, 292–3
3:19–27 479 n575
3:22–3 50 n227
3:48 50 n227
3:57 469 n544

Hosea
1:9 65 n313
2:23 529 n758
4:14 47 n209, 457 n495
13:8 551 n858

Joel
2:12 36 n138

Jonah 655 n1366
3:3–4 504 n655

Micah
6:2–3 505
6:3 36 n144

Habakkuk
2:4 69 n337, 561 n902

Zechariah
1:3 35 n132, 401 n243, 403, 405 n263, 749 n1742
1:4 629 n1229
13:7 295 n1068

Malachi
1:1–4 541 n822
1:2 53, 542 n825
1:2–3 46, 521 n726, 531 n767, 539–48, 539 n808, 545 n837
1:4 543 n832
2:7 217

1 Maccabees
14:35 75 n363

Matthew 443 n448
1:23–5 692 n1535
2:3–4 217 n657
3:2 400 n237
4:6 500 n638
4:18–20 560 n896
5:3 26 n93
5–7 174 n423
5:10 431 n391
5:12 40, 431 n389, 433 n399
5:17 578 n985
5:21–2 578 n985
5:22 40 n162
5:28 40 n162
5:33–4 578 n985
5:44 26 n90, 275 n967
5:48 365 n102
6:7 284 n1028
6:9–13 616 n1167
6:10 507 n671
6:12 705 n1591
6:33 437 n421
7:6 174 n418, 177 n442, 212 n631
7:7 41 n171, 401 n240, 435 n414
7:8 558 n889
7:11 682 n1485
7:17–20 212 n632
7:18 682 n1484
7:20 41 n175
7:24–7 41 n172
8:4 721 n1658
8:14 209 n615, 721 n1658
9:1 722 n1658
9:2–7 721 n1658
9:13 397 n222
9:17 20 n65
10:11 381, 435 n409
10:11–14 174 n419
10:14 173 n415, 177 n443
10:20 66 n321, 69 n334
10:25 365 n101
10:29 71
10:29–30 306
10:29–34 109 n75
10:30 71 n349
10:31 71 n350
10:39 26 n92, 275 n969
11:21 41 n173
11:25 18 n53
11:28 41 n171, 400 n236, 409, 696 n1554, 749 n1742
11:30 417 n323
12:20 20 n63
12:30 261 n893
12:32 131 n190
12:33 43 n192
12:37 241 n790
13:13 231 n736, 683 n1491
13:18–25 41 n172
13:41–2 132 n195
13:52 182 n464
15:34–43 426 n366
16:15–27 173 n409
16:18 228 n715, 368 n111, 628 n1228
16:20 173 n409, 218 n663
16:22–3 208 n605
16:24 275 n968, 431 n392, 433 n399
17:16 41 n174
19:11–12 209 n614
19:17 39 n158, 427 n373
19:19 563 n911
19:21 39 n159, 40 n165
20:1:15 559 n893
20:1–16 40 n166, 431 n389
20:14–30 40 n167
20:35–6 40 n168
20:42 40 n169
21:1–6 189 nn494–5
22:2–8 560 n895, 726 n1672
22:8 434 n406
22:15–22 173 n417
22:17–21 549 n854
22:23–33 173 n417
22:31–3 229 n723
22:34–6 689 n1518
22:37 410 n289
22:44 563 n913
23:15 735 n1706
23:23–37 505 n662
23:33 41 n174

23:37 39 n157, 51 n228, 421, 426 n367
24:36 166 n377
24:42 435 n414
24:42–4 41 n172
25:1–13 41 n172
25:13–15 41 n173
25:14–21 675 n1458
25:14–30 726 n1673
25:14–42 431 n389
25:15 559–60
25:15–23 68 n328
25:21 563 n913
25:21–3 70 n340
25:24–30 726 n1674
25:29 xcvii
25:34 70 n341, 71 n344, 435 n413
25:36–40 436 n417
25:41–6 710 n1610
26:31 295 n1068
26:39 568 n942
26:41 41 n171
26:66 208 n607
27:3–5 593 n1059
28:2 132 n197
28:20 26 n95, 275 n972

Mark
1:30 209 n615
2:17 232 n739, 397 n222
3:29 10 n24
3:29–39 131 n189
5:22–43 721 n1658
5:41 409, 409 n284
8:22 282 n1012
8:22–6 721 n1657
8:34 431 n392, 433 n399
8:35 275 n969
9:18 41 n174
10:46–52 109 n75, 721 n1657
12:28–31 665 n1412
12:28–34 689 n1518
12:30 401 n244, 410 n289, 563 n911
12:31 563 n911
12:36 563 n913
13:32 10, 166 n377
14:27 295 n1068
14:38 41 n171, 433 n397
14:64 208 n607
15:2–5 174 n422
16:15 132 n198, 133 n205, 172 n405, 175 n432, 371 n124, 684 n1493
16:16 401 n241, 433 n399, 561 n902
18:15 41 n171

Luke
1:28 616 n1168
1:34–5 152 n311
1:41–4 653 n1357
1:42 616 n1169
2:25–32 664 n1403
3:6 354 n70, 585 n1020
4:18 397 n219
4:38 209 n615
5:32 232 n739, 397 n222
6:23 433 n399
6:37 749 n1742
6:43–4 212 n632
6:48–9 41 n172
7:14 409
8:5–8 397 n220
8:8 435 n411
9:23 39, 275 n968, 431 n392, 433 n399
9:24 40 n161, 275 n969
9:41 41 n174
9:54–5 61 n290
10:1 536 n791
10:5–6 381 n157
10:13 41 n173
10:25–8 689 n1518
10:27 410 n289
11:9 401 n240
11:10 558 n889
11:13 682
12:15 41 n171
12:32 26 n91, 26 n93, 275 n970
12:33 749 n1742
12:42 182 n464
12:47 440 n435

12:48 372 n125
13:3 721 n1658
13:11–13 721 n1658
13:24 749 n1742
13:34 426 n367
14:16–20 560 n895
14:16–24 726 n1672
14:25 26 n92
14:28 149 n290
15:11 72 n351
15:24 624 n1209
15:32 624 n1209
16:1–9 70 n342
16:16 665 n1415
17:7–9 71 n343
17:10 70 n339, 71 n345
18:10–14 531 n768
18:35–43 109 n75
19:11–27 726 n1673
19:17 70 n340, 71 n344
20:42 563 n913
21:15 224 n701
23:4 659 n1391
23:9 174 n421
23:13–25 659 n1391
23:34 41 n176, 153 n314, 439 n431
23:56–24:1 651 n1340

John
1:10 370 n121, 684 n1494, 684 n1496
1:11 685 n1502
1:12 41 n177, 61 n294, 441 n439
1:12–13 685–7
1:14 221 n682, 585 n1020
1:16 687–8
1:18 273 n964, 275 n974
1:25 692 n1533
1:27 692 n1535
1:45–51 685 n1503
3:1–15 590 n1047, 685 n1503
3:1–21 20 n66
3:3–5 624 n1207
3:5–8 87 n400
3:6 61 n293, 586 n1030
3:8 36 n139
3:18 690–1
3:26–7 692
3:27 65 n317, 615 n1164
3:31 417 n330, 694 n1543
3:32 370
3:33 613 n1152
4:24 352 n64
5:35 218 n666
5:39 219 nn671–2
6 392
6:37 696 n1554, 697 n1559
6:40 695 n1551
6:44 66, 695–7
6:51 695 n1551
6:66 536 n792
6:67 695 n1552
6:68 41 n178
7:50–2 590 n1047
8:4–5 273 n966
8:5 26 n89
8:12 219 n668
8:21 694 n1545
8:23 694
8:24 694 n1545
8:31–6 591 n1048
8:38 694 n1545
8:44 674 n1454
8:48 208 n606
9:1–3 541 n818
9:1–12 721 n1657
9:5 219 n668
10:3–5 255 n871
10:28–9 704 n1588
10:34 450 n471
10:34–6 61 n294
11:43 409 n285
12:25 26 n92
13:10 590 n1045
13:18–30 610 n1133
13:37 467 n534
14:6 67, 689 n1517
14:15 40 n163
15:5 64, 301, 605–8, 607 n1121, 611–12
15:6 301 n2
15:7 40 n164
15:8 607 n1121
15:9 433 n397

15:15 70 n340
15:19 370 n120, 684 n1495
16:8 696 n1562
16:33 26 n94, 275 n971
18:13–14 560 n897
19:39 590 n1047
19:39–40 651 n1340
20:22–3 590 n1045
21:22 432 n395

Acts 199, 443 n448
  1:7 10
  2:22 173 n410
  2:22–36 666 n1417
  2:23 50 n223
  2:36 50 n223
  3:14 440 n434
  3:17 439, 440 n434
  3:19 440 nn433–4
  4:8 69
  5:3 43 n189
  5:13 101 n27
  5:34–9 20 n67
  5:38–9 101 n26
  5:40–1 26 n96
  6:10 69 n335
  7:51 523 n734
  8:21 634 n1261
  8:26–38 78 n375
  8:26–40 670 n1436
  8:27–31 234 n754
  8:27–39 675 n1462
  9:1–2 676 n1463
  9:1–19 670 n1437
  9:3–9 748 n1740
  9:10–19 713 n1626
  10 50 n224, 288 n1049, 672 n1442
  10:1–33 271 n943
  10:1–43 78 n374
  10:4 60 n283, 579–80, 675 n1459
  10:9–16 580 n997
  15:20 173 n416
  15:28–9 664 n1407
  15:29 173 n416
  16:1–3 664 n1407
  16:3 633 n1259
  16:7–8 748 n1737
  17:11 219 n673
  17:22–31 173 n411
  17:23 538 n803
  17:28 65 n315, 340 n13, 470 n549, 539 n805, 611 n1141
  17:31 666 n1417
  18:18 633 n1259
  19:1–8 590 n1046
  21:26 633 n1259
  24:21 267 n917
  26 174 n424
  26:24–5 267 n917

Romans xxiv, xxv, xciv, 250 n840, 487–92
  1:2 218 n659
  1:9 588 n1038
  1:14 102 n35
  1:15 561 n902
  1:17 69 n337, 651 n1334, 688 n1514
  1:18 408 n279, 646–8, 649, 651 n1337, 656 n1372
  1:18–20 340 n12
  1:18–22 61 n287
  1:19 587 n1035, 660–1
  1:19–20 218 n665, 272 n951, 465 n527, 690 n1520
  1:19–21 646 n1313
  1:19–23 660 n1394
  1:19–29 656 n1373
  1:20 358 n86
  1:21 650 n1328, 656 n1372
  1:28 305, 459 n502, 468 n539, 732 n1695
  1:32 648 n1321, 656 n1372
  2:2 42 n179, 443 n449
  2:4 42
  2:4–7 424 n358
  2:5 408 n279
  2:5–6 42 n180, 443 n449
  2:7 42 n181, 361 n91, 437 n422, 727
  2:8–9 408 n279

2:10 361 n91
2:11 176 n434, 657 n1381, 676 n1464
2:14 24 n82, 358 n86, 656 n1374
2:14–16 272 n951
2:17 358 n86
2:17–18 656 n1379
2:17–23 61 n287
2:21 657 n1380, 715 n1636
2:21–2 360 n89
2:21–5 667 n1420
2:22 440 n435
2:25 361 n91
3 654 n1363, 655 n1371
3:1 358 n86
3:2 389 n194, 391 n199
3:3 555 n878
3:4 691 n1530
3:10–11 358 n86
3:10–13 651 n1338
3:10–18 369 n115, 651 n1337
3:11 359 n88
3:12 370 n119, 370 n122, 650 n1332, 655 n1369, 656 n1377
3:13 359 n88, 652 n1346, 652 n1348, 654 n1360, 655 n1368
3:14 653 n1350
3:15 359 n88, 654 n1360
3:15–17 653 n1354
3:18 653 n1352
3:19 358 n86, 368 n114, 651 n1334, 654 n1358
3:19–20 663 nn1400–1
3:20 xxvi, xcii, 356 n80, 357–68, 359 n87, 363 n95, 369 n117, 382 n161, 564 n917, 662 n1397, 667 n1423, 668 n1426, 726
3:20–1 664 n1405
3:21 668 n1425
3:21–2 360 n89, 671 n1440
3:21–5 669 n1433
3:23 354 n71, 360 n89, 368 n113, 369 n116, 526 n744, 527 n748, 655 n1367, 660 n1392, 672 n1444
3:24 369 n118, 527 n749, 673 n1451
3:27 24 n82
3:28 360 n89, 668 n1425
4:4 727
4:4–5 679 n1475
4:8 679 n1476
4:9–12 360
4:10 679 n1477
4:16–17 530 n763
4:17 65
4:18 678 n1474
5:12 xxxvii
5:12–21 372 n126
5:15 687
5:17 527 n751, 688 n1513
5:20 60 n282, 363 n96, 578 n987, 669
5:20–1 383
6:4–10 75 n361
6:12 384 n166, 591 n1049
6:19 573 n966
6:23 577 n983
7:7 669 n1432
7:9 471 n554
7:14–25 699, 701–6
7:18 44, 251 n846, 471 n554, 656 n1374
7:18–19 513 n695
8:1–2 703 n1582
8:6–9 680–1
8:7 303, 582
8:13 59 n272
8:14 445
8:15 687 n1510
8:16 61
8:26 73
9 lxii–lxiii, 46
9:4–6 526 n743
9:6 526 n746, 555 n876
9:7 530 n763
9:10 526 n742, 529 n762

9:10–13 528 n754
9:11–12 46 n205, 524 n737, 530 n764
9:11–13 46, 520–48, 534 n782
9:12 523 n735, 532 n771
9:13 53 n239, 521 n726, 531 n767, 539 n808
9:14 526 n743, 531 n768
9:14–19 492 n611
9:15 463 n516, 528 n757, 532 n770
9:15–16 46 n204
9:15–18 500 n638
9:15–20 501 n640, 502 n646
9:16 48 n215, 502 n649, 532 n773
9:17 47 n212, 532 n775
9:18 175 n428, 305, 502 n647, 504 n657
9:18–19 48 n219, 532 n776
9:19 500 n634, 503 n650, 504 n660
9:19–20 510 n679
9:19–21 423 n356
9:20 49 n221, 483 n586, 492 n612, 505 n666, 506 n670, 510 n681, 525 n740, 526 n745, 533 n778
9:20–1 503 n652, 510 n680, 548 n847, 565 n923
9:21 482 n584, 551 n860, 553–7
9:21–3 54 n246, 55 n249, 56 n252
9:22 501 n643, 506 n667
9:24 53 n241
9:24–6 65 n313
9:25 529 n758
9:27 529 n759, 555 n875
9:30–1 511 n685
9:30–2 491 n609, 529 n761
9:31–2 xxvii n38, 448
9:32 511 n686
10:3 529 n761
10:6–8 10 n25
10:6–9 417
10:10 78 n368, 419 n338
10:12 725 n1671
10:17 697 n1560
10:20 682 n1487
10:20–1 683 n1489
11 423
11:1 549 n852
11:4 555 n877
11:16 727 n1680
11:16–24 54 n242
11:17–18 75 n361
11:20 54 n243, 54 n244, 511 n687, 523 n734, 545 n835
11:20–3 490 n607
11:22–3 424 n358, 511 n688
11:23 555 n879
11:25 54 n244, 545 n835
11:33 9 n18, 83 n390, 134 n212, 506 n670
11:34 548 n851
12:1 424 n358
12:2 624 n1209
12:21 385 n169
13:7 633 n1259
13:12 44 n194, 57 n262, 58 n266
14:1 20 n62, 20 n63
14:5 124 n152, 287 n1044, 744 n1729
14:23 682 n1486
15:5 133 n207

1 Corinthians
1:20 582 n1007
1:22–5 61 n287
1:23 370 n123, 649 n1325
1:27 18 n53
1:31 746 n1735
2:2 196 n535, 421 n346, 633 n1259
2:2–6 13 n38
2:6 196 n537, 582 n1007, 633 n1259
2:6–7 173 n413, 421 n346
2:7 108 n69
2:8 439
2:9–10 267 n916

2:10 421 n347, 574 n969
2:14–15 62 n295
2:15 214
3:1 196 n537
3:1–2 59 n273
3:1–4 573 n965
3:2 173 n412, 196 n538
3:6–9 149 n298
3:7 64 n311, 502 n649, 612–13
3:9 68 n329, 722 n1661
4:7 68 n327, 733 n1697
4:20 liv
5:1–5 381 n158
5:5 277 n984
5:9 177 n444
5:11 635 n1266
5:12 277 n982
6:11 359
6:12 lxxxix, 12 n33, 172 n401, 175 n430, 632 n1258
7:12–14 633 n1259
8:1 111 n91
8:4–13 632 n1258
8:5 414, 450 n471
9:1–18 177 n444
9:5 633 n1259
9:7 43 n185
9:8 573 n967
9:9 71
9:14–18 633 n1259
9:19–22 632 n1258
9:24 250 n837, 676 n1465
9:24–5 42, 443 n449
9:26 283 n1018
10:12 433 n397
10:32–3 566 n935
10:33 632 n1258
11:19 555 n871
12:3 18 n54, 619 n1185
12:6 57, 151 n303, 306 n5, 470, 471 n551, 566
12:10 200 n560, 215 n647, 234 n751
12:11 600 n1082
13:2 17 n52, 614 n1157
13:2–3 64–5
13:7 164 n369, 213 n637
13:9 234 n753
13:12 9 n21, 152 n310, 166 n379, 234 nn752–3
14:1–6 233 n748
14:29 234 n750
14:29–30 129 n172
14:30 234 n749, 608 n1127
14:30–2 566 n927
14:32 44
15:2 625 n1214
15:9 354 n73
15:9–10 71 n346
15:10 44 n198, 69, 73 n357, 148 n277, 148 n280, 439 n430, 461 n506, 625 n1214, 736 n1707
15:33 749 n1743
15:51 354 n69

2 Corinthians
1:12 582
3:5 67, 733
3:7–11 218 n662
3:8–9 612
4:4 414 n306, 450 n471
4:16 624 n1206
5:6–7 422 n348
5:10 676 n1466, 727
5:17 62 n295, 87 n401, 623 n1204, 624 n1208, 721 n1656
6:1 68 n329
6:15 43 n191
8:16 749 n1743
10:17 746 n1735
11:6 lxxxvii, 149 n297
11:7 633 n1259
11:13 254 n864
11:14 239 n779, 255 n865
12:4 196 n538, 633 n1259
13:3 18 n57

Galatians
1:11 573 n967
2:11–12 667 n1419
2:11–20 663 n1401

2:16 663 n1400, 727
2:20 69 n336
3:1–5 667 n1419
3:2 667 n1424
3:10 667 n1422
3:19 275 n974, 364, 668 n1428
3:22 368
3:23–4 363
3:24 666 n1418
4:2 666 n1418
4:9 232 n740
4:19 624 n1205
4:22–31 462 n510
5:6 679 n1478, 727 n1679, 727 n1682
5:9 271 n944, 482 n584
5:17 584 n1019
5:19 43 n188
5:19–20 303
5:20–4 699–701
5:21 705 n1589
5:24 704 n1583
6:7 146 n266
6:14 75 n361
6:15 62 n295, 624 n1208

Ephesians
1:10 624 n1209
1:11 68, 306, 471 n551
2:2 43, 474 n558
2:3 307, 372, 468 n537
5:14 409 n284
5:25 204 n581
6:5–6 633 n1259
6:17 278 n985

Philippians
1:15–18 172 n407
1:17 607
1:18 172 n403
2:1 218 n667
2:12 57, 69 n332
2:13 68, 76 n366, 251 n846, 427 n374, 471 n552
2:21 370, 632 n1258
3:13 9 n22
3:14 561 n900, 676 n1465
4:5 632 n1258
4:13 26 n97, 153 n316

Colossians
1:18 557 n887
2:2 254 n863
2:20 75 n361
3:9 44 n195
3:22 633 n1259

1 Thessalonians
1:5 254 n863
4:9 110 n89
5:2 41 n172
5:22 632 n1258
5:23 593

2 Thessalonians
2:4 412, 412 n302, 414 n307, 706 n1595
2:8 568
3:1 633 n1260

1 Timothy
1:13 154 n321, 381 n155
1:20 381 n156
2:4 693 n1541
2:13 559 n892
3:2 633 n1259
3:2–3 102 n34
3:7 633 n1259
4:1 254 n864
4:14 44 n197
6:1 633 n1259
6:12 42, 148 n278, 443 n449
6:16 422 n349, 444 n451
6:20 717 n1642

2 Timothy 223 n695
1:12 673 n1450
1:15 381 n156
2:3 43 n183
2:5 43
2:6 43 n184
2:9 172 n404, 172 n408, 175 n432

2:15 5 n1
2:16–17 555 n872
2:19 555 n874
2:20–1 55, 552, 553 n865, 553 n867, 715 n1636
2:21 44, 56 n251, 57 n258, 443 n449, 555 n879, 562 n907, 565 n924
2:24 633 n1259
3:16 45, 133 n208, 178 n445
4:2 lxxxvii, 148 n276, 172 n403, 172 n406
4:5 148 n276
4:7 148 n279, 461 n506
4:7–8 43, 50 n225
4:8 604 n1103

Titus
1:6 633 n1259
1:9 223 n697
1:12 106 n59
2:9 633 n1259
3:5 492 n613, 624 n1209

Philemon
10–12 633 n1259

Hebrews
1:1–4 275 n974
5:12 173 n412
5:12–14 196 n538
6:1 173
6:4–6 188 n493
6:11 254 n863
9:1 684 n1499
9:10 582 n1009
10:1 218 n661
10:22 254 n863
12:6 457 n495
12:15 87 n402
12:29 551 n859

James 443 n448
1:13–15 43 n187, 443 n449
1:17 68, 307 n12
1:18 623 n1202, 624 n1209
2:19 690 n1521
3:11 376 n137
3:15 582 n1008

1 Peter
1:17 423 n353
1:22–2:1 583–4
1:22–3 584 n1016
1:24 585 n1020
1:24–5 583 n1013
2:1 57 n262, 584 n1018
3:15 102 n33
3:15–16 20 n64
5:8 749 n1742

2 Peter 443 n448
1:5 443 n449
1:10 443 n449
1:19 218 n664
3:15–16 234 n755
3:16 7 n12

1 John
2:16 684 n1501
3:2 152 n310
3:3 44, 57 n260, 58 n265, 443 n449, 566 n928
4:1 18 n54, 255 n866
4:7 744 n1727, 749 n1743
5:1 61 n294
5:18 566 n930
5:19 684 n1500

Revelation
2:23 126 n161
3:20 66 n324
20:4 153 n312

General Index

For an outline of the main themes in the debate between Erasmus and Luther, the reader may also wish to consult the tables of divisions and correspondences in Erasmus' *Discussion of Free Will*, Luther's *The Enslaved Will*, and Erasmus' *Hyperaspistes* in CWE 76 312–21.

Abel (brother of Cain) 532, 562, 651
Abelard, Peter xix, 159 n343
– *In epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* 36 n142
Abraham 360, 527, 530, 679; ancestor of Job 537; descendants of 488–9; faith of 488, 678–9; God of 229 n723
accidental forms 735
accommodation, principle of ci n212, 12 n34, 14, 171–84, 195–6. *See also* common (uneducated) people; decorum; expediency; language; sermons; speech: accommodation to audience; truth: expediency in speaking
Achilles 420 n341, 606, 615, 616, 698, 704
act (meaning of word) 191
activism xcv
Adam 527; creation of 623; free will in 22–3, 741; questions about 382 n160, 741 n1720; sin and fall of 22–3, 286, 287–8, 338, 348–9, 381, 476
Adrian VI, pope li, lii–lvi, lix, lxix, 179 n451
affliction 486; distinguished from damnation 541–2, 543–4, 545–6, 549–50
Africa 243 n803, 246 n814, 271 n941
Agrippa, Marcus 730 n1689
Albania, king of 230
Alber, Erasmus 110
– *Iudicium de Spongia Erasmi* 110 n90
Alber, Matthew 98 n11
Albert of Brandenburg xxx, xxxv, xliv
Alcibiades 450
Alcuin *Commentarium in Apocalypsin* 67 n323
Aleandro, Girolamo xxxiv n58, xxxix, xli, xlii, l, lxxviii n163, lxxxiv, 111 n93
Alexander of Hales 15 n45
Alexander of Nequam 15 n45
Alexandria 636 n1273
Alexandrian school of literary criticism 220 n679
allegory, allegorical 220; interpretation of Babylonian captivity 577–8; interpretation of Jacob and Esau 524, 537, 541–2, 545, 546; sense of Scripture 53 n240, 537. *See also* figures of speech; Scripture: senses of
Altdorff, Nikolaus Herman von 2
Ambrose, St (of Milan) 286 n1039; as authority 15, 177 n444, 286 n1039, 412, 525, 636, 704; on divine justice 534; on free will 286 n1039, 350, 375; on generalizations in Scripture 647, 652; influence on Augustine c, 738

- *Commentaria in epistolam ad Galatas* 668 n1430
- *Commentaria in epistolam ad Romanos* 534 n782
- *De bono mortis* 720
- *De Cain et Abel* 286 n1039
- *De fide* 286 n1039
- *De Jacob et vita beata* 286 n1039
- *De spiritu sancto* 647 n1315
- *Expositio psalmi CXVIII* 412 n302

Ambrose, St (of Milan), works attributed to:
- *De vocatione omnium gentium* c, 339 n11, 380 n154, 648, 652 n1344, 684, 717
- *In epistolam Pauli ad Philippenses* 68 n331

Ambrosiaster 5 n1

Amerbach, Bonifacius 93 n1

Anabaptists 130 n180, 131 n183, 143 n256, 635, 636 n1269

Ananias (disciple) 713

Andrew, St 258

angels 654, 684; apostates 467–8; condemned 719 n1647; free will of 22, 263, 286, 339, 349, 719 n1653; necessity of immutability in 720; uncorrupted reason in 22. *See also* demons (wicked spirits)

animals: lack of reason in 720; mankind's lordship or dominion over 346–50, 519, 599, 627, 693; natural condition of distinct from that of humans 190; predetermined modes of existence of 82–3; in triads of nature 470 n549; virtues of 468

Annas (high priest) 439, 560

Anthropomorphites 450

Antichrist 412 n302, 412–13

Antioch, Council of (324) 111 n92

Apollinaris 636

Apollo 247

apostates 468

apostles: Christ's choice of 685; 'fleshly' 200, 573, 590; Holy Spirit in 199–200, 590; law of faith shown forth by 26; marriage of 177, 209, 721; miracles of 18–19, 406, 409; at Pentecost 590; preaching of 171, 173, 200, 218–19, 421, 435, 607–8, 612–13, 633, 684; required clarification of Scripture 218; responsive to grace 602

Apostles' Creed 227 n713, 228

appetite: natural 120; sensitive 586, 720

Aquinas, Thomas. *See* Thomas Aquinas, St

Aramaic language 409 n285

Aratus *Phaenomena* 470 n549

Archilochus 141 n245

Archytas of Tarentum 205 n598

Aristides of Athens 588, 708

Aristophanes 141 n245
- *Clouds* 285 n1029, 649 n1323
- *Plutus* 270 n935

Aristotle, Aristotelian xxv, 447; on contingency 159, 162 n357, 497; dynamics 290 n1053; on happiness of the gods 707, 708; on marriage 204; and scholasticism 151–2 n308; terminology 284 n1024, 287 n1045, 394 n214, 659 n1389, 708 n1606, 735 n1703
- *De sophisticis elenchis* 378 n148
- *Magna moralia* 593 n1057
- *Metaphysics* xviii n20, 707 n1601
- *Nicomachean Ethics* 56 n255, 86 n398, 593 n1057
- *On Interpretation* 159 n345
- *Physics* 159 n345
- *Topica* 262 n897
- *Treatise on Household Affairs* 204

Aristotle, works attributed to:
- *Oeconomia* 84 n392, 204 n580
- *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 97 n2

Arius and Arianism 111, 210, 232, 241, 245 n811, 450, 587; Athanasius' treatises against 156 n328; cited scriptural texts 275 n974. *See also* Christ: substance of

ark, tent of the 684

Arnobius of Sica 15

Arnobius the Younger lii
- *Commentaries on the Psalms* lii

Arnoldi, Bartholomaeus (of Usingen) xxiv, xxv

arrogance and pride 53–4, 70, 71, 356,

581, 598; of the gentiles 358, 545; of a godless king 56; of the Jews 53–4, 358, 360, 373, 522, 537, 538, 545, 727; of Pharaoh 485
Artaxerxes 748
articles of faith 450–1; contentious issues concerning 227–8; definition of 462; expression in Scripture 464
asp (or viper) 96 n1, 536
assertion: conditional 351–3, 357; distinguished from discussion 89 n405, 715; distinguished from scepticism 118, 119–20, 126, 127, 130
Astaeus 638
Athanasius, St (of Alexandria) lxxx, 156 n328
Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 79 n380
Athenians, altar of 521 n728, 538–9
Athens, Paul's preaching in 173, 666
Atlas 99
Attic rule 96
Augsburg, Diet of xxx
Augustine, St (Aurelius Augustinus) 5 n1, 122 n143; on the ability of the human will to do evil 279–80, 338, 741–2; on Adam 22 n76, 23 n77, 741; anti-Pelagian writings of 79, 210 n624, 251 n846, 272 n947, 279 n997, 344, 345 n38, 535, 716, 717 n1643, 728, 733–4 nn1697–8, 744; authority of 15, 350, 375, 412, 463, 525, 636, 647, 668; on the cause of historical events 5 n3; change of view on free will 251, 288 n1047, 717; comparison of good with light 729; on contingency 159 n345; controversy with Donatists 243; conversion c, 122 n143, 271; on cooperating grace 272, 280, 284, 289, 340, 723; discourse with Potitianus 271; dispute with Jerome 663, 664–5; on the distinction between the Old and New Testaments 274; Erasmus' opinion of xcvi–xcvii, 122 n143, 252 n852, 702; on the existence of free will 41 n177, 249, 251, 263, 264, 278, 283, 286, 375, 454, 636; on the glory of the Roman empire 575; on God's good and evil work in man 13; on good will 732; on impelling grace 340, 645, 733 n1696; influence of Ambrose on c, 738; influence on Erasmus xix, xxv; on Jacob and Esau 535, 537; on justifying grace 288, 340, 580, 621, 645, 723, 728; on the law of faith distinguished from the law of works 274, 276; Luther's admiration for xxvi, xxvii, 21 n69, 122 n143, 130, 216, 344, 454; Luther's citation of 208, 250–1, 284, 343 n28, 344, 385, 421, 429, 454, 576; on the Manichaeans 16 n49, 245–6 n812, 716, 738; manner of speaking xlviii, 263; on merit 738–45; on the middle ground between wickedness and justification 580, 645; on morally good works 284, 580, 741; on the obscurity of Scripture 130, 131, 216, 220, 232, 236, 240; on operating grace 136 n222, 289, 340, 386, 723; on original sin 372 n126, 535; on the origin of grace 743; polemic against Cicero 212 n630; position on free will lxxxi n167, 32 n122, 79, 284, 285, 420 n340; on preparatory grace 580, 723, 728, 733 n1696; on the relation of grace to free will xc, xcvi–xcvii, 151, 251, 613 n1156, 626, 645–6, 717, 722, 723, 733–4, 744; representative of the *via antiqua* ci; on salvation as gradual progress 270; on the salvation of children 463, 728 n1683; study of Paul's letters 79, 271, 738; on turning towards or away from grace 288; on unbaptized infants 463, 492, 690, 744; on the unforgivable sin 131 n188, 153 n315; on working grace 136 n222
– *Ad Valentinum ... epistolae duae* 380 n153
– *Confessions* c, 16 n49, 79 n376, 246 n812, 271 n941
– *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* 251 n846, 272 n947, 501 n644, 535 n785, 702 n1755, 716 n1640, 723 nn1664–5, 728 n1686, 734 nn1698–9, 734 n1702
– *Contra Fortunatum* 16 n49
– *Contra Iulianum* 744 n1730

- *Contra secundam Iuliani responsionem imperfectum opus* 245 n812, 352 n63, 463 n518, 484 n590, 651 n1334, 651 n1339, 734 n1698, 744 n1730
- *De civitate Dei* 5 n3, 22 n76, 80 n382, 212 n630, 263 n901, 575 n974
- *De consensu evengelistarum* 240 n785
- *De correptione et gratia* lxxxi n168, 340 n17, 342, 626, 629 n1234, 645 n1309, 733 n1697, 741, 742 n1721, 744
- *De dialectica* 270 n939
- *De diversis questionibus ad Simplicianum* 251 n846, 271 n944, 537 n796, 580 n993, 728 n1684
- *De doctrina christiana* 131 nn186–7, 216 n655, 220 nn674–5, 263 n901, 463 n519
- *De dono perseverantiae* 288 n1047, 723 n1663, 728 n1684
- *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 245 n812
- *De gratia Christi et de originali peccato* 251 n846
- *De gratia Dei* 272 n947
- *De gratia et libero arbitrio*: anti-Pelagian 272 n947; on charity 467 n534; cites Ecclesiasticus 344–5; on cooperating grace 30 n109, 467 n534; on the existence of free will lxxxii n168, xcvii, 21 n69, 251 n844, 263 n900, 278 n988, 350, 384, 535 n786, 629 n1230, 719 n1649, 743–4; on free will and sin 279–80, 352 n62; on God's good and evil work in man 13 n36; on merit and grace 728, 743; on morally good works 741; on operating grace 30 n109, 467 n534; on the origin of grace 491 n610; on Pharaoh 457, 481 n579, 574 n970, 649 n1324, 719 n1648; on the relation of grace to free will 69 n333, 251 n847, 342, 344, 385, 466–7 n534, 626, 645 n1309, 717 n1643; on unbaptized infants 463 n518; use of the term 'free choice' 338 n6, 339 n11
- *De haeresibus* 16 n49
- *De libero arbitrio* 245 n812, 251 n842, 263 n900, 288 n1047
- *De moribus ecclesiae catholica et de moribus Manichaeorum* 245 n812
- *De natura et gratia* 272 n947
- *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 270 n939, 281 n1006, 690 n1527
- *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 13 n36, 342, 491 n610, 535 n785, 580 n993, 723 n1663, 728 n1684, 733 n1697
- *De spiritu et littera* 272 n947, 274, 278 n988, 288 n1047, 301, 647 n1315, 651 n1334
- *De Trinitate* 122 n143, 156 n328, 236 n762
- *Enarrationes in psalmos* 233 nn742–3, 233 n747, 412 n302, 654 n1362, 690 n1523
- *Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide et spe et caritate* 243 n803
- *Epistulae ad Romanos inchoata expositio* 288 n1048
- *Expositio epistolae ad Galatas* 664–5
- *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistola ad Romanos* 372 n126, 463 n516
- *In Ioannis evangelium tractatus* 41 n177, 66 n323, 251 n846, 274 n964, 686 n1508, 696–7 n1555, 721 n1657
- *Liber de praedestinatione sanctorum* 288 nn1047–8
- *Retractationum libri duo* 249 n833, 251 n843, 264 n904, 288 n1047
- *Sermones* 131 n188, 153 n315, 288 n1048
- *Sex quaestiones contra paganos* 735 n1704
- *Super Genesim* 159 n343

Augustine, St (Aurelius Augustinus), works attributed to
- *Hypognosticon* 338, 348 n50, 717, 722, 723 n1666

Augustinians xxiv, xxx, 270 n933
Augustinus (a Franciscan) xliii
Aurelius, Marcus (Marcus Antonius) 588, 589 n1041

Baal, prophets of 202
Babylon 498, 597
Babylonian captivity of the Jews 576–8, 597, 599
Babylonian furnace 479

Bade, Josse xx n23
Baechem, Nicolaas xli, xlii, 141 n244
Baer, Ludwig lxvi, xciv n202, 52 n234
Balaam (prophet) 376, 395, 593, 605
Balatro 393
Balthazar. *See* Hubmaier, Balthasar
Bandinus, Magister 168 n390
baptism 17, 119, 282, 381, 433, 578, 692; of children 119, 144 n259, 287, 463, 492, 744–5; of the Ephesians 590; Lutheran views of 143
Barbaro, Ermolao lxxviii n163
Barbier, Pierre l
Basel lxix, lxxx, 236 n759; Council of (1439) 119 n132
Basil, St (of Caesarea) 15
Béda, Noël lxxvii, lxxx, 141 n244
– *A Declaration against the Clandestine Lutherans* lxxvii
Bede 66–7 n324, 412
– *Explanatio Apocalypsis* 67 n324
– *Homiliarium evangelii libri duo* 413 n302
– *In Marci evangelium expositio* 721 nn1657–8
– *In Matthaei evangelium expositio* 721 n1658
being 613, 614
Belial 309, 586
belief: in Christ 691, 695; as free gift 695–6; through free will 691, 695–6; as work 441
Bernard, St (of Clairvaux) xix, 67 n325, 151 n307, 231; as authority 350; denies necessity 718; on free choice 338; on God's justice and mercy 524; on relation of grace to free will 151, 272, 281, 340, 375, 717–19; on stages of human activity 67, 718 n1646
– *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 67 n325, 151 n307, 281 n1005, 338 nn7–8, 340 n16, 524 n738, 718 nn1644–6, 719 n1650, 719 n1652
– *Sententiae* 36 n142
– *Sermo in Dominica Palmarum* 189 n497
– *Sermones in Cantica canticorum* 36 n142, 231 n734
Bible. *See* Scripture
Biel, Gabriel 15, 28 n103; on free will 719–20 n1653; influence on Erasmus xix n22, xxvi n35, lxxxii n169; on merit 50 n226, 78 n373, 280 n1003
– *Epitome et collectorium ex Occamo circa quatuor Sententiarum libros* xxv, 720 n1653
– *Sacred Canon of the Mass* xxv
blasphemy 10 n24, 131, 154
Blount, William l
body (human) 585, 593–4; relation to soul 136, 190 n504, 203, 621, 735 n1703. *See also* flesh
Boethius 159 n345
– *Consolation of Philosophy* 52 n234, 504 n659
Bohemia 635, 635 n1269
Bolanus 284
Bombace, Paolo xlix–l
Bonaventure, St *Commentaria in quatuor libros Sententiarum* 745 n1732
Boniface I, pope 702, 716
Botzheim, Johann von 143 n256
bread (figurative use of) 455
breath (*spiritus*) 567 n934
breviaries 258 n883. *See also* church (Catholic): liturgy of
Brunfels, Otto lxxi, 207 n598
– *Pro Vlricho Hutteno defuncto, ad Erasmi Roter. Spongiam Responsio* lxv, 206 n597
Brutus, Marcus Junius 589
Bucer, Martin 99 n17, 143 n255, 635 n1269
– *Epistola apologetica* 143 n255
Budé, Guillaume 644
Bugenhagen, Johann (Pomeranus) 225, 236
– *In librum psalmorum interpretatio* 236 n760
Byblis 592

Cacus (monster) 249
Caesar, Julius 589, 708
Caiaphas (high priest) 439, 560
Cain (brother of Abel) 386, 536, 562
Cajetanus, Thomas de Vio (Gaetano), Cardinal xxx, xxxi, xlii, xliii

Callidius, Marcus 346

Camarina 212 n633

Camerarius, Joachim 206 n598

Campeggi, Lorenzo, Cardinal xlvi

Capito, Wolfgang Faber xxxii, lvi, lxxi, 98 n13; correspondence with Erasmus xxviii, xxx, xxxi; disagreement with Luther xxxii, 143; views on the Eucharist 98, 222

Capreolus, John 15

Caracciolo, Marino xliii

Carthage, Council of (417–18) 27 n101, 119 n132, 121 n141, 210 n624

Cassian. *See* John Cassian, St

Cato of Utica 191, 588, 589, 708

Celsus *De medicina* 712 n1621

ceremonial law. *See* law, ceremonial

Cervicornus, Eucharius (Hirtzhorn) lxviii

Chalcedon, Council of (451) 227 n714

chance (distinguished from contingency) 159, 496, 497, 631

charity: forgiveness through 439–40; as gift of God 30, 37; gradations of 737, 744; imperfect 467 n534; lack of 679, 727; language of 439, 440; link with faith 30–1, 78, 213, 225, 256, 260, 274, 679, 727; man is nothing without 614; perfection of 402; rule of 225, 260, 266; taught by the Law 670; works of 625

Charles v, Holy Roman Emperor xliv, xlv, xlvii, lii, liv

children and infants: attribution of wickedness to 468, 564; baptism of 119, 144 n259, 287, 463, 492, 709, 744–5; care and guidance of 355, 363, 622; between Christ and Satan 699; diversity of temperament in 472; growth and development of 624, 730–1; religious vows of 636–7; responsibility for parents 453; salvation of 728 n1683; spirit revealed to 18

Christ: authority of 692; belief in 691, 695; crucifixion of 49–50, 439–40; disciples of 174, 682, 685; divine and human natures in 151, 221 n684, 649, 695; divine nature concealed 173, 666, 697; drama of (*Christi fabula*) xvii n18; excepted from generalizations 574, 654; followers compared to sheep 696; as head of church 230 n727; human soul of 636 n1273; human speech of 354; human weakness of 82, 568; hypostatic union in 221 n684, 649; immortality through 690; innocence of under the Law 439; interpreter of Scripture 218; Isaiah's prophecy of 597; Jews condemnation of 49, 359, 371, 600, 650, 651–2; mankind grafted to 583; as Messiah 218, 345, 682 n1488, 691, 698; as minister of the gospel 612; miracles of 409, 721–2; presence in the Eucharist 98 n12, 115 n114, 174 n425, 222 n688, 256 n877, 635 n1269; questions about 221, 233, 482–3; recognition of 685; reign of 699–706; salvation through 423, 561, 746; source and minister of grace 687–8; spirit of 20, 75, 406, 591–2; substance of 111 n92, 119 n132 (*see also* Arius and Arianism); as vine 64, 607–8, 610; as word made flesh 221

Christian ii, king of Denmark 644

Christianity: basis of doctrine of lxi, lxxxix–xc; inquiry into the mysteries of 9–10, 11–14, 121–4, 129–35, 135–40, 196–7, 481–2 (*see also* education; Scripture: excessive curiosity about); lay community in xiii–xv, lxxxv, lxxxviii; *philosophia Christi* xxxiv; relation to philosophers' teachings 152 n308, 203–4, 272–3, 275–6, 587–9, 668; role of classical literature in xx; universality of cii. *See also* church (Catholic); common (uneducated) people

Christi fabula xvi–xvii

Chrysippus (philosopher) 265

Chrysopolitanus, Zacharias *In unum ex quatuor sive de concordia evangelistarum* 721 n1658

Chrysostom. *See* John Chrysostom, St

church (Catholic): canonical texts accepted by 291–3, 344; consensus and tradition of xviii, lxi, 128, 135–6, 161, 162–3, 200–2, 211, 253, 258, 716, 744 n1729; consensus of on free will lxxxix–xc, 121, 138–40, 147, 226–7, 228, 242, 258, 433, 716; contentious doctrinal issues in 119–20, 124, 161–3, 227, 228 n716; corruption within 211–12, 277, 634–5; directed by God 210–11; Erasmus' criticisms of xxii; Erasmus' loyalty and submission to lxxxviii, 7, 116, 117, 127, 141, 144, 228, 230, 749; Erasmus' view of history of xvi–xvii, cii; Erasmus' view of Luther's attack on xlvii–xlviii; liturgy of 206 n596, 344 (*see also* breviaries; Eucharist; sacraments); Luther's view of 210 n620, 260; reform of xxii, 115, 127, 170, 179, 634–5, 640; room for individual insights in 744. *See also* Christianity

Cicero 61 n288, 212 n630, 588 n1036, 707; Ciceronian eloquence 98 n10, 107

– *Brutus* 346 n44, 355 n77

– *De divinatione* 212 n630

– *De fato* 212 n630, 535 n787

– *De natura deorum* 203 n579, 212 n630

– *De officiis* 191 n507

– *De republica* 355 n77

– *In Vatinium testem interrogatio* 540 n810

– *Pro Roscio Amerino* 365 n105

circumcision 358, 359, 372, 632, 662, 664, 678–9

Clement VII, pope lxviii, lxix

Clichtove, Josse 98

– *Antilutherus* 98

Cochlaeus, Johannes (Dobnek) of Weldenstein 97, 99, 642 n1297

– *De gratia sacramentorum adversus assertionem Martini Lutheri* 97 n6

Codrus 599

Colet, John 82 n385

Collège de Montaigu (Paris) lxxxii n169, 280 n1003, 520 n725

Cologne, University of xl, xli, xlv, 207 n600

Comestor. *See* Petrus Comestor

commandments (of God): conditional 377–9, 390, 400–1, 426–7; distinguished from promises 442; future tense as imperative in 387; imperative and indicative moods in 389–91, 419, 563; language of 353; to love God 364, 401–2, 410; man's ability to observe 84, 353, 357, 377–9, 390–1, 392, 396–7, 402, 427, 575; power of 419; purpose of 84, 575; relation to free will 263, 384–5, 427, 744; Ten (the Decalogue) xxvi, 462, 563, 662, 702

Commodus Britannus 109

common (uneducated) people: acceptance of church consensus sufficient for faith of 152, 161, 162–3, 227; Christian outlook for lxxiii, ci, 9–10, 135–7, 139–40, 147, 149–50, 154, 225 (*see also* education); effect of Luther's writing on lxxiii, 508 (*see also* Luther, Martin: danger of his publications; Luther, Martin: German publications of); faith of distinguished from theological inquiry 151–3, 155–6; sermons for 166–7, 183, 195–6; topics unsuitable for discussion among 11–14, 120–4, 129, 133, 135, 136, 146–71, 150, 194–7, 227. *See also* accommodation, principle of; Christianity; church (Catholic); common sense; faith: distinguished from understanding; lay Christianity

commonplace (*locus communis*) 220 n679, 448, 553–4, 569, 586, 599. *See also* rhetoric

common sense 229–30, 254, 352, 390; in the interpretation of Scripture 353–4, 422, 431, 609, 655. *See also* common (uneducated) people

conciliarist doctrine 228 n716

concupiscence 24 n78

concursus generalis 31 n111, 31 n112, 31 n115, 50 n226, 79 n377, 340 n13, 516 n707. *See also* general motion of the first cause; God: as creator and conserver; grace: natural grace; influx of nature

condign merit. *See* merit: condign merit
confession 11–12, 85, 169, 441
congruous merit. *See* merit: congruous merit
conscience 592 n1054, 704, 705
consolation 431
Constance, Council of (1414–18) 11 n30; condemnation of Hus 133 n199, 252; condemnation of Wyclif's doctrine of necessity 13 n35, 45, 180 n460, 242 n796, 306, 446; Eck's defence of 606 n1113
Constantine (Roman emperor) 201 n569, 230 n727
consubstantiation 98 n12, 119 n132, 222 n688, 256 n878, 481, 649, 716
contingency 159–60; distinguished from chance 159, 496, 497, 631; distinguished from necessity xciv, 159–60, 495, 496–8, 519–20, 710; of divine foreknowledge 121–2, 136, 155–62, 710; Luther's view of 159 n345, 162 n357, 192 n512, 496, 631
contracts 376–7
contradictory modifiers 190
conversion 722–33; of Augustine c, 271; of the Ethiopian 670, 675; as gradual process 729–33; of Paul 555, 670, 681, 683, 748; of sinners 381, 411; as sudden transformation 731; as three-part process 722–3
Corinthians 568, 573, 620 n1186, 700
Cornelius (centurion) 271; Holy Spirit in 581 n998; imperfect righteousness of 288, 672; preparation for grace of 50, 60, 78, 579–80, 675
Coronel, Luis Núñez lii
Corycian cave 9, 133–4, 220, 413
cosmic sanctuary 684 n1499
councils (ecclesiastical) 179, 228. *See also* the following councils: Antioch; Basel; Carthage; Chalcedon; Constance; Florence; Lateran; Lyon; Nicaea; Orange; Trent
counsel (activity of man) 718, 719 n1647
Counter-Reformation lxxviii n163
Cranach, Lucas, the Elder 302, 643
creation: as contingent 51 n232, 496; drama of xvi; as exterior action of God 51 n332, 158 n341; of mankind 621–2; mankind honoured in 169 n390; out of nothing 268 n921, 621; scriptural obscurity concerning 220; teaching of philosophers about 203
Cretans 106
curiosity (of mankind) 14 n40, 463, 525, 533, 551–2; about Scripture 140, 506, 509
Cyprian, St (Caecilius Cyprianus) 15, 243
Cyril of Alexandria, St 15
Cyrus (II, the Great) 576, 577

D'Ailly, Pierre xxv, lxxxii n169, 11 n30, 28 n103, 168
– *Quaestiones super primam, tertium, et quartum Sententiarum* 11 n30
damnation: distinguished from temporal affliction 541–2, 543–4, 545–6; fear of 732; of Jews 426, 549, 571; of sinners 132, 422–3, 425–6, 434, 560, 561; of unbaptized infants 463, 690, 709, 744–5; undeserved 558, 561, 571, 599–600, 621, 691, 709
Dante *Paradiso* 273 n959
darkness: gradual progression towards light 270; obscurity of Scripture as 232–3, 239 (*see also* light: of Scripture); of reason 23–4, 23 n78, 26–7, 287, 465, 594
David 427, 531, 568, 651, 664
death 720, 732; rebirth as resurrection from 721–2; wages of Satan 577
debauchery 699
Decalogue. *See* commandments (of God): Ten
declamations 221 n686, 224, 247
decorum 171 n400. *See also* accommodation, principle of
demons (wicked spirits) 704, 705–6; angels of Satan 238; free will of 263, 338, 719; strength of free will against 704, 705–6. *See also* angels; Satan
Demosthenes (orator) 707
Denys the Carthusian 11 n29
devotio moderna xix

dialectic 354, 689; rules of 352 n65, 368, 387, 655
Dido 592
Didymus the Blind 636
Diet of Augsburg xxx
Diet of Worms xlvii, l, lxxvi, 111 n93
Diogenes Laertius *Vitae philosophorum* 707 n1600
Dionysius of Syracuse 84
discussion (meaning of for Erasmus) lxvii, lxix–lxx, 5 n1, 89 n405, 715
Doctors of the church. *See* Fathers and Doctors of the church
Dominicans xxxviii, lix, 10 n27
Domitian (Roman emperor) 79 n380
Donatists 243 n803, 253, 254
Dorp, Maarten van xxii, 563 n910
drama of Christ (*Christi fabula*) xvi–xvii
drama of creation xvii
drama of history xxiii
Drechsel, Thomas 144 n259
dualism 15 n46, 245 n812
Durandus (Durand de Saint Pourçain) xix n22, 15, 50 n226
Dürer, Albrecht 95, CWE 77 frontispiece

earth (as element) 189 n500
Echo 285
Eck, Johann Maier of xxx, xxxix, 6, 164, 165 n370, 342, 606 n1113
- *Ad criminatricem Martini Luders … offensionem … Eckiana responsio* 606 n1113
- *Asseritur hic invictissimi Angliae regis liber des sacramentis …* 606 n1113
- *Defensio contra amarulentas D. Andreae Bodenstein Carolstatini invectiones* 6 n4, 164 n368
- *De primatu Petri adversus Ludderum* 606 n1113
- *Disputatio Iohannis Eccii et Andreae Carolstadii et Martini Lutheri* 6 n4, 164 n368
- *Obelisci* 164 n368

Edict of Worms (1521) xliv, xlvii, l, lvii
Edomites 541, 543, 544
education: condemnation of secular studies 131, 143; *trivium* 200 n558, 390 n198; in wickedness 700, 736–7. *See also* Christianity: inquiry into the mysteries of; common (uneducated) people: Christian outlook for
emotion 102, 593; of God 462, 572
Empusa 117, 454
Emser, Hieronymus (Jerome) 92, 97, 229 n720
endeavour 403, 437, 600; God and man cooperate in single effort 618–19
Enoch 651
Epaminondas (Theban statesman) 589
Ephesus, disciples at 590
Epictetus (philosopher) 465, 588
Epicurus (philosopher) 105
Epimenides the Cretan 106 n59
Erasmus: anti-Semitism of xlii; in Basel l, lxxx; called asp or viper 96 n1, 536 n789; criticisms of Catholic church xxii; death of civ; decision to write against Luther l, lv, lxv, lxix–lxx, 100–2, 138–9, 147, 163, 228, 255, 335–6, 442; doctrinal reasons for opposing Luther lxii–lxiii, lxix, lxxxvii, 75, 78 n369; humanist (exegetical, rhetorical) theology of xi–xxiii, lxxiv–lxxxvi, xcii, xcv n205, xcviii, civ, 27 n100 (*see also* humanism and humanist movement: theology; theology); illegitimate birth of 294 n1067; languages spoken by 229 n720, 247–8; Latin style of 2–3; loyalty to Catholic church lxxxviii, 7, 116, 117, 127, 141, 144, 228, 230, 749; papal dispensations of xiii, 294 nn1065–6; patrons of lxxiv; *philosophia Christi* of xxxiv; portraits of CWE 76 frontispiece, 95, CWE 77 frontispiece; preliminary arguments against Luther (Ep 1342) lx–lxiv; principle of accommodation of (*see* accommodation, principle of); religious anthropology of xciv; religous psychology of xcv; role in contemporary spiritual conflicts lxxxi; and scholasticism xvii–xviii, lxxxix, 121 n142, 520 n725 (*see also* theology); at Steyn xii, 294 n1067; suspected of support for Lutheranism lvi, lix, lx, lxxvii, lxxxiv, 101, 103, 111–

12, 147, 228 n715, 247, 335, 639; theological method confused with Luther's lxix, lxxvii, lxxxiv (*see also* theology); and the *via moderna* xxv–xxvi (*see also* theology); vision of history of cii
Erasmus, original works:
– *Acta* xli–xlii
– *Adagia* lxxx; (I i 6) 197 n543, 214 n644, 216 n652, 230 n729, 387 n185, 411 n297; (I i 7) 284 n1026; (I i 15) 121 n140; (I i 19) 149 n295; (I i 24) 423 n354; (I i 34) 465 n528; (I i 35) 222 n691, 404 n254; (I i 42) 520 n725; (I i 51) 382 n164; (I i 53) 241 n789; (I i 64) 212 n633; (I i 67) 99 n22; (I i 68) 422 n351, 480 n578; (I i 74) 562 n908; (I ii 4) 476 n566; (I ii 9) 13 n37, 184 n475, 228 n718; (I ii 36) 712 n1622; (I ii 47) 114 n103; (I ii 63) 345 n42; (I iii 15) 6 n8, 179 n452; (I iii 21) 631 n1253; (I iii 27) 639 n1284, 748 n1741; (I iii 38) 636 n1270; (I iii 41) 337 n4, 519 n719; (I iii 53) 143 n252; (I iii 66) 103 n38; (I iii 76) 6 n9; (I iii 92) 597 n1071; (I iv 4) 101 n30, 394 n215, 442 n446; (I iv 23) 101 n29, 247 n824; (I iv 30) 246 n815; (I iv 59) 280 n1001; (I iv 67) 356 n81, 378 n145; (I iv 70) 350 n57, 428 n376; (I iv 75) 512 n692; (I iv 87) 376 n136; (I iv 89) 147 n274, 290 n1054; (I v 3) 33 n124; (I v 4) 87 n399, 141 n243; (I v 5) 538 n802; (I v 7) 634 n1263; (I v 29) 203 n573; (I v 31) 203 n573; (I v 36) 389 n193, 390 n196; (I v 52) 247 n822, 366 n107; (I v 88) 547 n839; (I vi 13) 638 n1281; (I vi 21) 260 n889; (I vi 30) 647 n1316; (I vi 70) 712 n1621; (I vi 76) 599 n1082; (I vii 23) 644 n1304; (I vii 31A) 285 n1029; (I vii 41) 185 n479, 606 n1114, 699 n1566; (I vii 51) 64 n310; (I vii 55) 93 n6, 158 n338, 181 n462, 183 n470, 246 n816, 259 n888, 378 n142; (I vii 90) 20 n60; (I viii 4) 157 n335; (I viii 29-30) 106 n60; (I viii 48) 447 n460; (I viii 57) 142 n248; (I viii 59) 398 n230, 443 n449; (I viii 69) 739 n1714; (I viii 82) 138 n231; (I ix 4) 71 n348; (I ix 19) 103 n39; (I ix 28) 512 n691; (I ix 39) 212 n632; (I ix 54) 482 n582; (I ix 55) 482 n582; (I ix 59) 191 n510; (I ix 69) 638 n1282; (I ix 73) 595 n1066; (I ix 75) 38 n151; (I x 24) 366 n106; (I x 25) 655 n1365; (I x 30) 139 n237, 238 n784, 434 n403; (I x 45) 29 n107, 726 n1677; (I x 59) 434 n404; (II i 54) 108 n71; (II ii 10) 603 n1099; (II ii 36) 285 n1033; (II ii 74) 109 n83, 117 n122, 427 n371, 454; (II iii 5) 199 n556; (II iii 26) 344 n30; (II iii 35) 25 n83; (II iii 91) 116 n120; (II iv 13) 265 n907; (II iv 28) 567 n934; (II iv 57) 97 n3, 133 n204, 644 n1305; (II v 82) 150 n299, 151 n302, 152 n309, 153 n317; (II v 87) 230 n725; (II vii 12) 247 n818, 518 n714; (II vii 44) 205 n589; (II vii 66) 177 n439; (II viii 91) 712 n1622; (II viii 93) 443 n447; (II x 9) 103 n40, 105 n52; (II x 51) 5 n2; (III ii 75) 200 n564, 249 n834, 260 n890, 351 n59, 427 n372; (III iv 1) 116 n121; (III iv 49) 399 n234; (III vi 45) 336 n5; (III vi 47) 248 n829, 249 n831; (III ix 68) 179 n452; (III ix 91) 117 n123; (III x 32) 337 n3; (IV iii 61) 75 n362; (IV iii 70) 241 n788, 246 n814; (IV iii 89) 356 n81, 378 n145; (IV iii 94) 113 n96, 155 n322, 222 n687; (IV v 86) 148 n282, 151 n305; (IV vi 1) 587 n1034; (IV vi 48) 183 n469; (IV viii 83) 249 n835; (IV ix 39) 220 n678; (V i 32) 142 n250; (V ii 20) 730 n1689
– *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* xxvi, xxviii, xxxviii, l–li, lxxx, lxxxiv, 100 n24, 409 n285, 521 n728; Matthew 228 n715; Luke 397 n219, 536 n791; Romans xxvii n38, 533 n779, 646 n1312, 702 nn1575–6, 704 nn1585–6; 1 Corinthians 177 n444
– *Antibarbari* xx
– *Apologia ad Fabrum* 221 n684, 641 n1294
– *Apologia adversus libellum Stunicae … Blasphemiae et impietates Erasmi* 228 n715

- *Apologia contra Latomi dialogum* xxii, 156 n332
- *Apologia qua respondet invectivis Lei* 156 n331
- *Apophthegmata* 365 n105
- *Axiomata pro causa Lutheri* xliii–xliv
- *Catalogus lucubrationum* lxiv
- *Ciceronianus* xxi n23, xxix n43
- *Colloquia*: 'Echo' 285 n1036; 'An Examination Concerning the Faith' 227 n713; 'A Fish Diet' 294 n1066; 'The Godly Feast' 63 n308, 305 n4; 'The Knight without a Horse' 634 n1262; 'Military Affairs' 634 n1262; 'A Problem' 290 n1053; 'The Whole Duty of Youth' 637 n1274
- *Compendium vitae* xxviii, 294 n1067
- *Consilium* (with Johannes Faber) xliv–xlv, liv, lvii, lxxvi
- correspondence: *Farrago* xxxiv; (Ep 67) xx n23; (Ep 68) xx n23; (Ep 187A) 294 n1067; (Ep 326) 111 n90; (Ep 396) 111 n90; (Ep 446 intro) xiii n2; (Ep 447 intro) xiii n2; (Ep 501) xxvii n37, 663 n1399; (Ep 541) xxix n42; (Ep 756) 730 n1689; (Ep 785) xxx n46; (Ep 844) 252 n852; (Ep 858) xiv n7, xiv n9, xvi n17; (Ep 872) xxx n47; (Ep 877) xxx n47; (Ep 910) xxxi n50; (Ep 933) xxxii n55; (Ep 937) xxxi n52; (Ep 938) xxxi n53; (Ep 939) xxxii n54; (Ep 947) xxxi n51; (Ep 980) xxxiii–xxxiv nn56–8, 114 n107, 115 n110, 236 n763; (Ep 1000) 243 n802; (Ep 1006) CWE 76 xi; (Ep 1033) xxxv–xxxvi nn61–2; (Ep 1039) xxxvi n63; (Ep 1040) xxxiv n59; (Ep 1041) xxxv n60; (Ep 1079) 294 n1066; (Ep 1083) 115 n110; (Ep 1113) xxxvii n65, xxxvii n67; (Ep 1119) xxxviii n68, 115 n110; (Ep 1126) xxxviii n70; (Ep 1127A) xxxix n71, 110 n87; (Ep 1128) 115 n110; (Ep 1141) xxxix n72, 179 n453; (Ep 1143) xl n73; (Ep 1156) xlv n87; (Ep 1167) xlvi n88; (Ep 1180) xl n74, xlix n95; (Ep 1186) xlvii n91; (Ep 1195) xlvii n92, 108 n74; (Ep 1202) xlviii n93; (Ep 1211) xv nn14–15; (Ep 1213) xlix n96; (Ep 1217) xlix n94; (Ep 1218) 111 n93; (Ep 1219) l n98; (Ep 1232) 238 n778; (Ep 1236) l n97; (Ep 1244) li n99; (Ep 1255) lii n101; (Ep 1259) li n100; (Ep 1268) lxiii n129; (Ep 1273) lii n102; (Ep 1274) lii n102; (Ep 1275) lii n103; (Allen Ep 1292 intro) 130 n180; (Ep 1304) liii n104; (Ep 1310) liii n105; (Ep 1324) liii n106, 179 n451; (Ep 1329) liv n107; (Ep 1332) 174 n426; (Ep 1338) liv n108, 179 n451; (Ep 1341A) lv n112, 6 n7, 174 n426; (Ep 1342) lix–lxiv, 145 n262, 256 n875; (Ep 1344) lvi n114; (Ep 1352) lvi n113; (Ep 1353) 294 n1066; (Ep 1367) lxx n149; (Ep 1369) 131 n183; (Ep 1384) 247 n825; (Ep 1395) lxvi n135; (Ep 1397) lxv n132, 247 n825; (Ep 1405 intro) 207 n598; (Ep 1408) 247 n825, 255 n869; (Ep 1419) lxvi n138, 160 n348; (Ep 1420) lxvi n138, 160 n348; (Ep 1430) lxvi n139; (Ep 1432) 207 n598; (Ep 1443) lxvii n141, 100 n25, 247 n825; (Ep 1443B) lxviii n144; (Ep 1445) lxvii n142, 145 n262; (Ep 1446) lxviii n145; (Ep 1477) 110 n90, 255 n869; (Ep 1477B) 110 n90, 255 n869; (Ep 1479) lxxvii n161; (Ep 1481) lxx n147, lxx n151; (Ep 1486) lxx n148; (Ep 1487) lxx n149; (Ep 1488) lxx n149; (Ep 1489) lxx n149; (Ep 1493) lxx n150; (Ep 1495) lxx n150; (Ep 1496) lxxi–lxxii nn152–4, 110 n88, 110 n90, 130 n181; (Ep 1500) lxxii n155, 101 n32, 109 n82; (Ep 1510) 255 n869; (Ep 1522) 130 n181, 247 n825; (Ep 1523) lxxiv n156, 143 n255; (Ep 1526) lxxvi n158; (Ep 1538) 236 n759; (Ep 1539) 130 n181, 143 n256; (Ep 1584) 114 n102; (Ep 1585) 114 n102; (Ep 1586) 114 n102; (Ep 1522) 130 n181; (Ep 1596) 228 n716; (Ep 1597) 114 n102; (Ep 1598) 114 n102; (Ep 1601) 114 n102; (Ep 1603) 114 n102; (Ep 1606) 114 n102; (Ep 1633) 114 n102; (Ep 1634) lxxviii n162; (Ep 1653) 114 n102; (Ep 1667) 93 n1, 93 n4; (Ep 1672) 174 n426; (Ep 1686) 114 n102;

(Ep 1688) lxxix n165, 642 n1296; (Ep 1717) 114 n102; (Ep 1729) 642 n1297; (Ep 1770) 336 n4; (Ep 1804) lxxx–lxxxii nn166–9, lxxxiv nn171–2; (Ep 1853) 335 n1; (Ep 3007) 179 n451; (Ep 3052) 179 n451
– *De contemptu mundi* xiii
– *De libero arbitrio*: content of lxxxv–lxxxvi; development of lxi–lxvi; female personification of 213 n635; German translation of 2, 229 n720; pairing with Luther's texts lxxxvii, cv; publication and editions of xxiv, lxviii–lxx, 2; responses to lxx–lxxvi; scope of 264, 337–8; title of 5 n1, 89 n405; written in haste 3, 107, 157
– *De pueris instituendis* 286 n1039
– *De sarcienda ecclesiae concordia* 636 n1269
– *De taedio Iesu* 82 n385
– *Enarratio Psalmi 3* 537 n797
– *Enchiridion* xiii–xiv, xvii, xvii n19, lxxxviii, 204 n582, 593 n1057
– *Epistola ad fratres Inferioris Germaniae* 99 n17, 111 n92
– *Epistola contra pseudevangelicos* 99 n17
– *Exomologesis* 12 n31
– *Hyperaspistes 1*: German translation of 92, 97 n5, 229 n720, 248 n827; publication and editions of lxxviii–lxxix, 92, 93 n2; relation to Luther's texts lxxxvii, cv; scope of lxxix, 93 n7; structure and content of lxxxvii–xci; title of 96 n1, 536 n789; written in haste lxxviii, 92, 93
– *Hyperaspistes 2*: antagonism of lxxxiv; delay of lxxix–lxxx, lxxxiii; length of CWE 77 xii, 337 n2; publication and editions of CWE 77 xi, 334; reasons for writing 335–6; relation to Luther's texts xxxvii, xc, CWE 77 xii; scope and content of lxxxi, xci–civ; title of 96 n1, 536 n789
– *Institutio principis christiani* 84 n291
– *Julius exclusus* lxii
– *Lucubrationes aliquot* 156 n328
– *Methodus* xiv
– *Moriae encomium* xlviii, lxxxiv, 123 n151, 151 n304, 154 n321, 209 n617, 248 n830, 250 n839, 378 n144, 521 n728, 562 n904, 563 n910, 597 n1071
– *Paraclesis* xxi, 178
– *Paraphrasis in Novum Testamentum* xxi, lxii–lxiii, lxxvii, lxxx, lxxxiv; Matthew lii, 178; Luke 72 n351; Romans lxiii, 702 n1575, 704 nn1585–6; Hebrews 684 n1499
– *Ratio verae theologiae* xiv, xvii n18, xxxi, lxxxv, 220 n675, 228 n715
– *Responsio ad annotationes Lei* 156 n331
– *Spongia* lxiv–lxv, lxvi, 145
Erasmus, translations and editions:
– Arnobius the Younger *Commentaries on the Psalms* lii
– Athanasius lxxx, 156 n328
– Hilary *Opera* 155 n327
– Jerome (letters) xxviii
– John Chrysostom lxxx, 156 n328
– *Novum instrumentum* xxviii, xxxviii, 3, 43 n189, 44 n193, 44 n197, 61 n291, 156 n331
– *Novum Testamentum* l–li, lxxx, 3, 156 n331; Matthew 726 n1674; Acts 43 n189, 44 n197, 634 n1261; Romans 61 n291, 727 n1681; 1 Corinthians 354 n69; Galatians 727 n1678; 1 Timothy 44 n197
– Seneca lxxx
– Valla *Adnotationes in Novum Testamentum* xx n23, 15 n48
Erfurt, University of xxiv, 484 n591
error: of Paul 209, 681, 683; of saints 207–8, 231; spirit of 260
Ethiopian (converted by Philip) 670, 675
Eucharist 255, 450, 649; common people's understanding of 152; consubstantiation 98 n12, 119 n132, 222 n688, 256 n878, 481, 649, 716; dissenting Lutheran views on lxxxiv, 98, 132, 133, 222, 256, 450, 635 n1269; Karlstadt's views on 113 n97, 174; as mystery 173; performed by wicked minister 693–4; presence of Christ in 98 n12, 115 n114, 174

n425, 222 n688, 256 n877, 635 n1269; transubstantiation 119, 222 n688. *See also* church (Catholic): liturgy; mass
Euripides *Medea* 592 n1055
evangelicals 635
Eve 22–3, 476
events: cause of 5 n3, 48, 497; divine providence distinguished from free will in 62–4; nature of 516; outcome of 600, 601–5; primary and secondary causes of 50, 80, 153, 194, 406, 493, 497–8, 622; redirection by God 49–50, 622
Everaerts, Nicolaas xlvi
evil. *See* sin or wickedness
exhortations: in the gospel 429, 748–9; Luther's definition of 429, 430; meaningless without free will 36–8, 39–41, 55, 400, 412, 505; purpose of 429
expediency (in preaching truth) 12, 14, 171–84. *See also* accommodation, principle of
Exsurge Domine (Leo x) xxxvii, xxxix, xli, xliii–xliv, CWE 77 xi–xii, 79 n379, 242 n796, 300

Faber, Johannes xliv, xlv
Fabri, Johannes lxv, lxvi, 256, 641
facere quod in se est doctrine lxiv, ci, 32 n119, 341, 380, 388, 396, 434, 505, 561 n901, 601, 627 n1223. *See also* merit; worth and worthiness
faith: acquired 745; articles of 450–1; distinguished from ceremonial law 360, 678–9; distinguished from understanding 151, 187, 525 (*see also* common [uneducated] people); in divine justice 707; of gentiles and Jews 54, 55–6, 491; as gift of God 30, 383, 441, 491, 727; before the gospel 273; gradations of 737, 741; habit of 287 n1045; heals reason 25; imperfect 672, 734, 739; infused 745; under the Law and under the gospel 688; Law as preparation for 363; light of 272–3, 491; link with charity (love) 30–1, 78, 213, 225, 256, 260, 274, 679, 727; perfection of natural knowledge 707; relation to free will 77–8, 441; salvation by (Luther's doctrine) xxv, lxix, xcii, 78 n639; taught by the Law 670
Farel, Guillaume lxxi
fate 716
Fathers and Doctors of the church: authority of 199–200, 213, 222, 252–3, 350, 461, 484–5, 714–15; consistency of lives and writings 248–9; Erasmus' use of xciv; on free will 227, 241–2, 244–5, 246–51, 384, 598; Greek and Latin 252; knowledge and interpretation of Scripture 197–8, 224, 232–3, 244–5, 463–4, 482–3; on merit 740; as saints 213; unclear terminology of 740–1; use of term 'free will' 716, 717; varying views among 212, 391, 740–1
fatum 716
fear: Christ's (of suffering) 82; of damnation 732; of God 506, 603, 736; of hell 732; as restraint from wickedness 736
Festus, Portius 267
figures of speech (figurative language) 447–69; about God 38–9, 540, 572; generalizations as 654–5; not all aspects apply 586, 722; proof of 454–5, 456; as source of scriptural obscurity 195–6, 239–40; use by Luther 448–9, 475, 483. *See also* allegory, allegorical; language; Scripture: grammar of; Scripture: interpretation of, figures of speech; Scripture: interpretation of, grammar of; Scripture: senses of; similes and metaphors
filioque clause (Nicene Creed) 10 n26, 119 n132, 224 n699
fire (element) 189 n500, 493
Fisher, John, St (bishop of Rochester) xxxi, 35 n132, 627; writings against Luther lxx, 98, 108, 212, 617, 638, 713
– *Assertionis Lutheranae confutatio* (1522) 16 n49, 98 n8, 454 n485
fitness (*congruitas*). *See* merit: congruous merit

flesh 680–1; conflict against the spirit 699–706; desires of, and religious life 636–7; emotion as 593; as human weakness 60, 566–74, 581–5, 590, 597; mankind as 59, 60–2, 585, 667; meanings of word 581–6, 593; relation to spirit 573, 585–9, 680; weakness of distinguished from wickedness 568, 571–3, 584–5, 586, 710; wisdom of 582, 585, 680–1; word made 221; works of 699. *See also* body (human)
Flood, the 60, 569–74, 575
Florence, Council of (1438–9) 10 n26
Floriszoon, Adriaan. *See* Adrian VI, pope
foetus 730 n1689, 735 n1703
foreknowledge, divine: contingent 121–2, 136, 155–62, 710; distinguished from divine justice 534; distinguished from human foreknowledge 499; of future and past 488, 498; of good and evil 528, 529; of Pharaoh's actions 479–80; relation to free will 48, 461, 710; relation to God's will 499–500; relation to merit 436; relation to necessity lxix, xciii–xciv, 48–50, 51–3, 150, 493–512, 513–20, 630. *See also* God; predestination; will (of God): relation to divine foreknowledge
forgiveness 439–40, 441
form 284; accidental distinguished from principal 735
fornication 195 n528
Franciscan theologians 10 n27, 123 nn147–8
Frankfurt book fair lxxix, 93
Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony xxxii, xliii–xliv, xliv, lvii
freedom: of counsel 718, 719 n1647; distinguished from liberation 718; distinguished from slavery 190, 263, 289, 339; of God 28 n102, 496 n628, 558–66 (*see also* free will: relation to God's freedom); of lordship 348–9; lost through sin 289; of mankind 288; of pleasure 718, 719 n1647
free will (free choice): abuses of 85–7; active and passive aspects of 147–8, 150, 151–3, 184–7, 279, 289, 340, 342, 376, 406, 427–8, 618, 625; Catholic consensus on lxxxix–xc, 121, 139–40, 147, 226–7, 228, 242, 258, 716; in the context of the 'grammar of consent' ci; distinguished from instinct 623; distinguished from rights 693; Erasmus' definition of xc–xci, 21, 261–91, 341; of fallen mankind 286, 287–8, 338–9, 506; as 'of the flesh' 681, 683–98; humanist view of lxxxv, ci; inneffective without grace 189–92, 281, 286, 710–11; lack of 644–61; limited by papal decrees 347, 349–50; in lower affairs 347–50, 519, 630–1; as mankind's inherent good 742; not a risk to God's grace 733; in ordinary or natural affairs 614; as origin of evil 476; overemphasis on 74–5, 85–6 (*see also* Pelagius and Pelagians); philosophers' teachings on 203, 716, 717; as question for discussion 121, 166, 167 (*see also below* teaching on for common people); reasons for 87–8, 466; relation to God's freedom 192–4, 263, 710 (*see also* freedom: of God); summary of teaching on 286–91, 745–9; teaching on for common people ci, 9–10, 135–7, 139–40, 147, 149–50, 154, 225 (*see also above* as question for discussion); terms for cv, 263, 286, 338–9, 384–5, 716, 717, 740–1; in three stages of human activity 67, 79–80, 341–2, 386–7; three ways or degrees of 340; varying views of 27–33, 86–7, 264, 278–81, 374–5, 416, 420, 433, 452, 715, 717–19, 746–8; as 'of the world' 683–98. *See also* grace; will (human)
Freiberg, University of 256 n874
Froben, Johann (printer) xl, lvi, lxiv, lxviii, lxxx
fruit of the gospel 64, 607–8, 614

Gaguin, Robert xx n23
Galatians 568, 624, 666, 670
Gamaliel 20, 100
Geldenhouwer, Gerard xxxix

Gellius, Aulus *Noctes Atticae* 366 n106, 622 n1199
general influence. *See concursus generalis;* influx of nature
generalizations (in Scripture) 369, 370–2, 574, 646–7, 650, 654–5, 660–1
general (universal) motion (action) of the first cause 470–1, 473–4, 477, 480–1, 483, 485, 621, 742. *See also concursus generalis*
gentiles: difficulty of instructing 736; faith of 489, 491, 511, 522; free will of 682; God's acceptance of (distinguished from his rejection of the Jews) 54, 424, 488–92, 506–7, 511, 522–4, 544–5; before the gospel 584, 648, 649, 697–8, 707–8; include both good and wicked 506, 682–3, 685, 736; in the interpretation of the story of Jacob and Esau 53–4, 524, 537, 547; Jews called before 560; knowledge of sin among 737; laws of 737; Paul's approach to 358, 646–7; recognition and glory of God among 656, 657, 660; response to the gospel 397, 711; virtues of 734–8; worship of idols among 413, 414, 597, 598. *See also* pagans and paganism
George, duke of Saxony lvii, lxx, lxxiv–lxxvi, lxxv, 109 n77, 138 n233
German (Saxon) language 248, 611; Erasmus' publications in 2, 229 n720, 248 n827; Karlstadt's publications in 174; Luther's publications in 167, 175 n429, 228, 248, 300, 624 n1210, 640, 642, 644
Gerson, John (Jean) xix n22, lxxxii n169
– *Sermo de nativitate gloriosae Virginis Mariae* 745 n1733
giants (in Genesis) 569–70
Giberti, Gian Matteo lxx
gift(s): accepted by free will 695, 711; distinguished from legacy 742; of God 725–8; of nature 723; of prophecy 233–4; of the spirit 700, 727–8
Giles of Rome 15 n45
Giles of Viterbo 15 n45
Glapion, Jean lii
Glossa ordinaria (attrib Walafrid Strabo) 69 n331, 72 n356, 233 n747, 721 n1657, 721 n1658. *See also* Scripture
Gnatho 99
Gnosticism 508 n673
God: anger against sinners 407–8; anthropomorphic descriptions of 450, 462, 572, 576–7; assistance of the weak 402; cooperation with mankind in single action 618–19; covenant with Israel 545; covenant with mankind 505–6, 693; covenant with Noah 572–3; as creator and conserver 159 n343 (*see also concursus generalis;* general motion of the first cause; *see also below* power of); crucified 421–2, 494, 507; doctrine of necessity makes cruel or unjust 75–7, 82–4, 184, 185, 187, 396, 415, 420, 507; foreknowledge of (*see* foreknowledge, divine); freedom of 28 n102, 496 n628, 558–66; glory of 598, 672–3; guidance (teaching) of mankind 355, 368–74, 620 n1186; incomprehensibility of 684, 706; judgment of 42, 59, 534; justice and goodness of 78, 185–7, 396, 415, 420, 475, 481, 492, 510, 523–4, 558–9, 706–10, 727–8, 747 (*see also* justice, divine); kingdom of 436–7, 590–1, 699; love or hatred of 53, 523–4, 539–48; mercy of 46–7, 48, 147–8, 185, 457–8, 464, 502–3 (*see also* justice, divine); mutability of 38–9; obedience to 74–5, 82–3, 550; omnipotence of 260, 509, 693; omnipresence of 11, 165; power of xciii, 159 n343, 558–66 (*see also above* as creator and conserver, *and below* as primary cause of events); power of as absolute (*potentia absoluta*) xciii, 28 n102, 50–1 n227, 51 n229, 124 n151, 289 n1050, 509 n676, 693, 731; power of as ordained (*potentia ordinata*) xciii, 50–1 n227, 50 n227, 124 n151, 289 n1050, 509 n676, 671, 693; as preached or not preached 260, 412, 415, 425, 455, 456, 458, 475–6, 494, 507; as primary cause of events

49–53, 493, 497, 500, 509, 621 (*see also above* power of); redirection of events 49–50, 622; rights of in relation to mankind 505; truth of 187; varying approaches to mankind 411, 675–6, 748; as worshipped or adored 411 n14, 421 (*see also* will [of God]: adoration of; will [of God]: hidden or inscrutable). *See also* foreknowledge, divine; will (of God)

God of Abraham 229 n723

golden rule 24 n81, 25, 510

good (distinctions of) 658, 681, 682, 711, 728, 731

gospel: approach of the gentiles to 670; Christ as minister of 612; clarification or fulfilment of the Law in 218, 488, 578; distinguished from the Law 274, 400–11, 429–31; exhortations of the 429, 748–9; faith under 688; fruit of 64, 607–8, 614; general grace of 435; grace before 670; insincere preaching of 607–8, 614; liberty of 167; as light 218–19; Luther's definition of 429; offered to all 547; in the Old and New Testaments 429; pagans removed from 275; Paul elected to preach 461; preaching of 171, 175, 612–13; promises of 400–1, 429; Satan's use of 500; spread throughout world 607; transition from Law to 663 n1401, 664, 665–6. *See also* New Testament; Scripture

grace: as admonishing 270 n937; apart from the Law 677; available to all 600, 686; Christ the source of 687–8; constant help of 602; desire for 645; distinguished from nature 615; failure to live up to 625; as free gift 673–4, 676, 688, 724–8, 739; God's withdrawal of 490–1; God's withholding of 512; before the gospel 670; of the gospel 687–8; gradations of xcviii–xcix, 728–9, 744; as gradual process 729–33; human will cooperates (works) with 67, 72, 77–82, 184–94, 617–28, 722; kinds of 31–2, 269, 272, 278, 340–1, 376, 615, 728–9; light of 721, 730; as limitation of free will lxxxv; middle ground in 395, 397, 645, 671–2; mysteries of 717 n1643; not denied those who do the best they can (*facere quod in se est*) lxiv, ci, 32 n119, 341, 380, 388, 396, 434, 505, 561 n901, 601, 627 n1223; not sought but accepted 683; overemphasis on by Karlstadt and Luther 74–5, 85–7; perfects the good of nature 659; position in presence of 394–7; progression from Law to 368–74, 382, 396; relation to free will xc, xcix, 27–33, 86–7, 278–81, 397–9, 693, 717 n1643, 722–4, 733–4; as rider of human will 189 n495; role in conversion 722–33; similes describing progess in goodness 729–33; through merit *de congruo* lxxxii, c, 627 n1223, 728, 738–40; worthiness for 434–5, 724–8, 739. *See also* free will; merit; worth and worthiness

– common grace (also called natural grace) 24 n79, 494

– consummating grace 278

– cooperating grace (*gratia cooperans*) 48 n216, 278, 338, 494, 625–6, 728; also called justifying 24 n79, 78 n373, 340; Augustine's view of 30, 136 n222, 272, 280, 284, 289, 340; called co-working grace 136 n222; makes will effective 32, 272; will can assist 676; works with will 280, 284, 289

– effective grace 269–70, 281, 282

– general grace 376

– impelling grace xcix, 24 n79; allows middle ground between sin and justification 645; also called operating 340; also called preparatory 340, 467 n534, 494; also called prevenient 340; available to all 459–60, 491; distinguished from preparatory grace 728–9; free will turns towards or away from 441, 491, 620, 698; gradations of 729; human will makes itself available to 410, 433, 490, 574, 600, 743, 746; as knowledge of God 465; link to repentence 733; link

with inherent human virtue 732; link with morally good works 561, 601; in Pharaoh's case 480; scriptural expressions of 409, 471; sinners turn towards or away from 340–1, 434–5, 458–9, 570–1
- imperfect grace 269, 271, 272, 280, 281, 288, 744
- inviting grace 677
- justifying grace (*gratia justificans*, now usually called sanctifying) 24 n79, 27 n101, 31, 376, 615; also called cooperating grace 24 n79, 78 n373, 340; Augustine's view of 288, 340, 580, 621, 645, 723, 728; Fisher's view of 627 n1223; the grace which makes pleasing 731; as new creation 621; preparation for 579; role of will in attaining 287, 491, 612, 676, 718, 744; Scotus' view of 614 n1160, 620 n1188; through merit 27 n101, 78 n373, 561; through morally good works 78, 466, 580, 614, 735, 738
- natural grace 31, 32, 269, 340, 376, 494 (*see also concursus generalis*)
- operating grace (*gratia operans*) 24 n79, 35, 136, 278, 338, 494, 728–9; also called impelling 340, 467 n534; also called preparatory 340, 467 n534; also called prevenient 30, 340; also called working 136 n222; Augustine's view of 30, 136 n222, 289, 340, 386; follows particular grace 31–2; man worked upon by 399; as warning from God 386; will accommodated to 341, 433; will allows response to 186–7; will withdraws from 620; will works with 281, 289, 434, 620, 723
- particular grace (also called *gratia gratis data, gratia peculiaris,* impelling, inviting, operating, prevenient, stimulating) lxxxii, 24, 31, 32; desire for salvation from lxxxvi n179; in philosophers 588; preceded by action of will xcvii, 376, 471, 614, 621; Scotus' view of 580, 614 n1160
- perfecting grace 340
- performative grace 494
- persevering grace (*gratia perseverans*) 31 n111, 32 n121, 48 n216
- preparatory grace 269, 282, 287, 494; also called operating 340, 467 n534; also called prevenient 340; Augustine's view of 466, 467 n534, 580, 723, 728; with free will 612, 676, 732; gradations of 729; and impelling grace 466, 494, 728–9; Luther's view of 615; and merit *de congruo* 467 n534, 620 n1188, 627 n1223; with morally good works 711; not denied anyone 459; in Pharaoh 480
- prevenient grace 24 n79, 31 n111, 48 n216; accepted by will 79 n377; also called gratuitously given (*gratia gratis data*) 24 n79, 29 n103; also called impelling 340; also called operating 30, 340; also called particular 24 n79; also called preparatory 340; also called stimulating 72; as imperfect 272; and merit *de congruo* 29 n103, 78 n373
- proficient grace 728
- progressive grace 494
- sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens, gratia justificans*) 31 n111, 32, 395, 415, 578; also called cooperating 78 n373; also called justifying 31 n117, 78 n373; follows prevenient grace 29 n103; and free will 490
- special grace 280, 281
- stimulating grace 24 n79, 278, 282, 287, 288; also called prevenient 72; as imperfect 32, 280, 289
- sufficient grace 494, 728, 731
- working grace (*gratia operans*) 136 n222

grammar: modist grammarians 563 n910; ordinary people's understanding of 353, 390; part of *trivium* 200 n558, 390 n198; in the Scriptures 353–4; for understanding Scripture 217, 219, 232, 233, 239, 451, 609; for understanding the Law 217. *See also* language

'grammar of consent' xc, ci

grass, flesh as (metaphor) 60, 581–5, 597

Gratian *Decretum* xlvi, 205 n590

greed 699
Greek language 647
Greek Orthodox church 119 n132, 122 n144, 224 n699
Greeks 252, 660, 684 n1499
Gregory of Rimini 15 n45, 50 n226, 152 n591, 277, 484, 609
Gregory the Great, St 70 n342, 208, 244 n978, 258 n883, 576; story of prayers for Trajan 273 n959, 588 n1039
– *40 Homiliae in evangelia* 721 n1658
– *Moralia in Iob* 70 n342, 721 n1657
Guicciardini, Francesco CWE 76 xi
guidance: of children 355, 363; differs from compulsion 63–4

habit (*habitus*) 287 n1045, 394 n214, 708 n1606; of faith 287; of sin 468, 471, 480, 485, 700, 702–3; of virtue 394, 708
Hagar (servant of Sarah) 462
Hail Mary, the 616
Hannibal (in the tomb) 190
happiness 707, 708, 709, 718
Hausmann, Nicolas lxxiv
heart: of flesh and of stone 56–7; God's knowledge of 126, 177 n438; preparation of 63, 601–2; secrets of 255
Hebrew language 409 n285, 574–5, 577, 686; idioms 647, 662, 672, 721
Helicon 268
hell 132, 730, 745
Henry VIII, king of England xxxviii, xliv, liv, lxvi, lxix; Erasmus letters to lxvi, lxx; Luther's attack on lxi, 98 n7, 99, 115, 336 n7, 393 n209, 642, 644
– *Assertio septem sacramentorum* (1521) liv, lxi, 98 n7, 99 n20, 642 n1296
Hercules 103 n38, 104 n48, 249 n836
heretics and heresies 382, 450, 554–5, 556, 587, 607, 610, 699
Herman, Haio lxxvii
Herman, Nikolaus 2
Hermogenes (pseudo) *On Invention* 538 n803
Herod 670
Hesiod (Greek poet):
– *Theogony* 266 n914
– *Works and Days* 266 n914
Hezekiah (king of Judah) 365, 504, 597
Hilary, St (bishop of Poitiers) 15, 41 n177, 155 n327, 286, 351, 636, 719
– *De Trinitate* 41 n177, 155 n327, 286 n1038
– *In evangelium Matthaei commentarius* 722 n1658
Hillen, Michaël lxviii
history xxiii, cii, 5 n3
Homer 680
– *Iliad* 56 n256, 103 n44, 169 n393, 185 n479, 461 n505
– *Odyssey* 87 n399, 116 n119, 240 n786, 461 n505, 470 n547
homoousios. *See* Trinity, Trinitarian theology
Horace 160
– *Ars poetica* 148, 377 n140, 416 n318, 621 n1190
– *Epistles* 595 n1066
– *Satires* 86 n397, 124 n154, 139 n235, 284 n1025, 336 nn5–6, 393 n208
Hubert, St 729
Hubmaier, Balthasar 130, 130 n180, 143, 636 n1269
humanism and humanist movement 644 n1303; activism of xcv; attacks against xxxvii, lxxviii n163; effect of Lutheran movement on li, 143, 294; origins of xvi n16; pagan and Christian aspects of xx–xxi; *studia humanitatis* xxxvii; support for Luther xl, xlviii, liv, lxix, lxxiv; theology xi–xxiii, xcv n205 (*see also* Erasmus: humanist theology of; theology); view of lay Christianity xiv–xv, lxxxv, lxxxviii
human nature xciv–xcv; corrupted by original sin but possess seeds of virtue 736; implies imperfection 573; representation of in the Gospels 721
Hungary, king of xliv
Hus, Jan 133, 230, 252 n849; aligned with Luther 250, 252, 455, 494, 636; on the Eucharist 635–6 n1269; view

of the papacy in *Tractatus de ecclesia* 230 n727
Hut, Hans 636 n1269
Hutten, Ulrich von lvi, lix, lxiv–lxv, lxvii, lxxi, 207, 215 n646, 634–5 nn1264–5
– *Expostulatio cum Erasmo Roterodamo* lxiv, 145 n262, 206 n597
Hyperbolus the Athenian 355
hypostasis 221 n684, 649. *See also* incarnation

idols, worship of 413, 414, 597, 598
images (of saints), abolition of 130, 143
immortality: pagan concept of 707–8; of the soul 161 n354, 203; through Christ 690
impenitence 153
imperative mood (verbs) 389–91, 419, 511, 563, 566, 603, 629
incarnation 158 n341, 159 n343. *See also* hypostasis
indicative mood (verbs) 389–91, 419, 566
indulgences xxx–xxxi, xxxv, 85 n395
infants. *See* children and infants
influx of nature (*influxum naturalem*) 31 n112, 340, 610, 615, 621. *See also* *concursus generalis*
Ingolstadt xxx, 164 n368
innocence: bestowed by baptism 381, 578; of Christ 439; doubled by grace 579; of man 22
Inquisition, Neapolitan 252 n848
Irenaeus, St 350, 508, 719
irony 426
Isaac (son of Abraham) 489, 491, 502, 524, 526, 527–8, 530, 678
Ishmael (son of Abraham) 489, 491, 502, 527–8
Islamic theologians 193 n521
Israelites. *See* Jews

Jacob (called Israel) 526
Jacob and Esau 46, 53–4, 134, 489, 491, 502, 520–48; allegorical interpretations of 524, 537, 541–2, 544, 546
Jacob of Hoogstraten (inquisitor) xi, xxxiv, xxxviii, xlii
Jacobus de Voragine *The Golden Legend* 588 n1039
Jansenists lxxxiii
Jerome, St (Eusebius Hieronymus): on allegory 220; anti-Pelagian writings 63 n300, 210 n624, 600, 619 n1183; attack on Luciferians 245; on canonical texts 22, 292; on ceremonial law 662–4; considered an authority xix, 15, 235, 350, 412, 463, 483, 492; dispute with Augustine 663, 664–5; Erasmus compared to 110, 111 n90; Erasmus' edition of letters xxviii; Erasmus' opinion of xxvi, lxii; on flesh 699; on free will 63 n300, 286 n1041, 339, 386; on God's cooperation with man 619; on God's love and hatred 540; knowledge of languages xxvii, 130; Luther's opinion of 127, 208–10, 424, 484, 521–2, 525, 533, 539, 550, 567, 569, 576, 598, 609, 619, 662–4, 704; on marriage 209; on Pharaoh 47, 449, 456 n493, 457 n494, 461; on salvation 740; on scriptural obscurity 130, 232–3, 500–1; on synderesis 592 n1054
– *Ad Ctesiphontem adversus Pelagium* 735, 740 n1715, 741 n1717
– *Adversus Jovinianum* 286 n1041
– *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem* (trans) 3, 22 n70, 96 n1, 111 n90
– *Commentaria in evangelium Matthaei* 721 n1658
– *Commentarii in epistolam ad Galatas* 668 n1429, 699 n1569
– *Commentarii in Esaiam (Commentarii in Isaiam prophetam)* 47 n208, 60 n281, 62 n297, 397 n219, 582 n1006, 651 n1339, 653 n1355
– *Commentarii in Ezechielem* 52 n233, 166 n376, 233 n744
– *Commentarii in Malachiam prophetam* 540 n813, 543 n829
– *Commentarii in prophetas minores* 233 n742
– *Commentarii in psalmos* 233 n743, 233 n745, 233 n746

- *Commentariorum in epistolam ad Ephesios libri tres* 372 n127, 373 n129, 651 n1334
- *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos* 619 n1183
- *Dialogus contra Luciferianos* 245 n811
- *Hebraicae questiones in libro Geneseos* 59, 60, 386 n177, 569 n945
- *In Hieremiam prophetam* 48 n218, 52 n233, 62 n299, 599 n1079, 600 n1082
- *Opus prophetale* 130 n176
- *Prologus in libris Salomonis* 22 n70
- *Prologus in libro regum* 22 n70
- *Prologus in Pentateuch* 96 n1
- *Tractatus sive homiliae in psalmos* 233 n745

Jerome, St (Eusebius Hieronymus), works attributed to:
- *Breviarium in Psalmos* 233 n742, 233 n746
- *Commentarium in epistolam ad Romanos* 534 n784, 663

Jerusalem 549, 576, 577, 599, 607, 652; Peter's preaching in 666

Jesuits lxxxiii

Jethro 713

Jews xxix, c; arrogance of 53–4, 358, 360, 373, 522, 537, 538, 545, 727; Babylonian captivity of 576–8, 597, 599; belief in one God 736; canonical texts of 22, 291–3, 344; condemnation of Christ 49, 359, 371, 600, 650, 651–2; damnation and destruction of 426, 549, 571; on difficult scriptural texts 166; expectation of Messiah 682, 691, 698; first to be called 560; generalizations about 369, 370–2, 650, 652; and the gentiles 53–6, 362, 488–92, 506, 507, 511, 522–4, 677–8; God's promises to 482, 486, 488; God's rejection of 54, 55–6, 424, 488–92, 502, 507, 523, 549; before the gospel 649, 697–8; in the interpretation of Jacob and Esau 53–4, 520–48; Law given by God to 368; mysteries hidden from 196–7; observance of the Law 358–61, 577, 651, 670; Paul's approach to 358–61, 373, 656, 679; rejection of Christ 682, 685, 695, 697–8; rejection of the gospel 54, 397, 488–90, 507, 511, 523, 545; reliance on the Law 488–9, 491, 511, 529, 624–5, 677; salvation of 273, 359–60, 362–8, 506, 522, 537, 544, 590, 647–8, 650–4, 682–3, 685, 736; virtues of 734–8; worship of golden calf 528, 532. *See also* Law (Mosaic); law, ceremonial

Job 537 n795, 651, 707

Jobab, king of Edom 537 n795

John the Baptist, St 65, 581 n998, 590, 615, 653, 692, 694

John Cassian, St 5 n1

John Chrysostom, St 15, 636; as authority on scriptural interpretation xciv, 412, 463, 483, 492, 501, 538, 555; Erasmus' edition of lxxx, 156 n328; on free will 386, 686–7; 'golden mouthed' 533 n780, 696; on human curiosity 463, 533, 551–2; influence on Erasmus xcii n197, xcvii; Luther's scorn for 704; on merit 534; on simile of potter and clay 550–2
- *Adversus Iudaeos* 664 n1409
- *Commentarius in epistolam ad Romanos* 361 n90, 372 n126, 418 n331, 463 nn516–17, 525 n741, 526–33, 550–2, 651 n1334
- *Commentarius in Matthaeum* 77 n367
- *Homiliae in epistolam ad Hebraeos* 684 n1499
- *In capita 5 et 6 Genesis* 571 n954, 572 n958
- *In epistolam ad Galatas commentarius* 663 n1400, 668 n1430
- *In epistolam secundam ad Thessalonicenses commentarius* 412 n302
- *In Ioannem homiliae* 686 n1509, 695 n1550, 696 n1555
- *In librum Geneseos homiliae* 386 n177

John Damascene, St 15, 67 n325

John the Deacon *Vita Sancti Gregorii* 273 n959

John the Evangelist, St 591, 683–98

John Fisher, St (bishop of Rochester). *See* Fisher, John, St

John of Salisbury *Policraticus* 273 n959
Jonas, Justus xlvii–xlviii, 228 n719, 255–6, 638 n1280, 640–1, 642; alleged collaboration on *De servo arbitrio* 266 n913, 642 n1297
– *Adversus Iohannem Fabrum* ... 256 n874, 641 n1292
Joseph (son of Jacob) 306, 600; Judas Iscariot 460, 479, 512–20; acknowledgment of sin 593; betrayal of Christ a necessity according to Luther xciv, 51–2, 495–6, 498–9, 509, 514–15; fall of 536, 555, 610
judgment(s): of the church 128; in the controversy between Luther and Erasmus 248, 250–1, 257–61; of God 42, 59, 534; mentioned in Scripture 76; of popes 230
Julian (a Pelagian) 484, 716, 724
Julius II, pope lxii, 294 n1067, 503
Julius Victor *Ars rhetorica* 202 nn570–1
Jupiter 470, 539, 584, 663
justice, divine: distinguished from divine foreknowledge 534; of the Law and of the gospel 360; revealed to all 671. *See also* God: justice and goodness of; God: mercy of
justification and salvation: as apart from the Law 582, 663 n1401, 669–70; available to all 521, 522, 561, 686, 693; of children 728 n1683; Christ's promise of 423, 561, 746; evangelical 364, 372; faith as path to 30–1, 522; fleshly 582; as free gift 674, 676, 711; before the gospel 372, 697, 745–6; as gradual process 270, 729–33, 744; history as process of cii; incomprehensibility of 266–7; levels of 590, 731–2; Luther's doctrine of (salvation by faith alone) xxv, lxix, xcii, 78 n639 (*see also simul iustus et peccator*); meaning of 669–70; only through the Spirit 429; pharisaic 667, 670; reason for 422–3, 425–6; through morally good works xcii, 270, 561; through natural law 745; through natural powers 648; of unbaptized infants 463; undeserved 621; without special grace 270
Juvenal 168
– *Satires* 133 n209, 216 n653, 373

Karlstadt, Andreas Bodenstein von xc, 6 n4; aligned with Luther 14 n41, 164, 282, 565, 717 n1641, 720 n1654; disagreement with Luther 113, 115, 129 n172, 129 n173, 130, 143, 625; Erasmus' citations of 5, 110 n90, 113 n97, 343 n28, 420 n340, 452, 645 n1307, 677; on the Eucharist 113 n97, 133 n202, 174, 256 nn877–8; on secular studies 131 n184; on will as only capable of evil xcvi, 34 n129, 58 n269, 74 n360, 280, 284–5, 345 n39, 389, 625; on will as passive in good works 33, 278–9, 289, 342, 376, 406, 427–8, 618, 621, 625
– *Confutatio* 164 n370
– *Epistola adversus ineptam et ridiculam inventionem Johannis Echii* 6 n4, 164 n370
Keturah 528, 529–30
knowledge: distinguished from acknowledgment 359; distinguished from understanding 128–9, 187; gradations of 734; of the past 498, 499

Lambert, François, of Avignon 165
– *Digressio ... de arbitrio hominis in solo Christo vere libero* 165 n371
– *In ... Oseam ... commentarii* 165 n371
Lang, Johann xxv, xxvii, xxx
language(s): of charity 439, 440; common everyday 606, 608, 611; Jerome's knowledge of 130 n176; legal distinguished from evangelical usage of 404–5, 407; obscurity of 130, 196, 239, 266; of Scripture 14, 195–6; simplicity of 450; spoken by Erasmus 229 n720, 247–8. *See also the following languages*: German; Greek; Hebrew; Latin. *See also* accommodation, principles of; figures of speech; grammar; Scripture: grammar of;

Scripture: interpretation of, according to grammar; Scripture: interpretation of, figurative language in; speech
Łaski, Jan 93 n1
Lateran Council, Fifth (1512–7) 161 n354
Lateran Council, Fourth (1215) 119 n132
Lateran synod (649) 227 n714
Latin language 2–3, 128, 143, 247–8, 611, 642 n1301, 644, 647
Latomus, Jacobus (Jacques Masson) xxii, xxxvi, xxxvii, xlii, 141 n244, 156 n332
- *De trium linguarum et studii theologici ratione* 156 n332
- *Dialogus* xxxi
Laurinus, Marcus lix–lxiv, lxvi
law: counterplea 202; distinguished from expediency 12; divine distinguished from human 363; of pagans 273, 366, 650; proof required by 201 n567; right of possession in 201 nn568–9; of tyrants 356, 365–6
Law (Mosaic): abrogation of 665–6, 667; access to 735, 735 n1704; Christ's innocence under 439; clarification or fulfilment of by the gospel 218, 488, 578; clarity of 216–17; distinguished from gentiles' law 737; distinguished from law of nature 358, 373, 663 n1400; and faith 363, 491, 678–9; as force for virtue 362, 363, 742; fulfilment of through free will 661–73; goal of 363, 669; God's relation to man under 25 n84; and the gospel 274, 400–11, 429–31; hypocritical observance of (letter but not spirit) 358, 360, 424–5, 488, 677–9, 681, 711, 726–7; interpretation of 117, 216–17, 266 n915, 453; justification apart from 582, 663 n1401, 669–70; knowledge of sin through 356, 357–68, 382, 388–9, 391, 395–6, 397, 439; light of reason in 273; Luther's definition of 429; praise of in Scripture 362; as preparation c, 363, 369, 736; as progression to grace 368–74, 382, 396, 397; purposes of 362–8; salvation under 361, 745; transition to gospel from 663 n1401, 664, 665–6. *See also* Jews; Old Testament; works of the law
law, ceremonial 348, 359–60, 488, 679; distinguished from faith 360, 678–9; distinguished from spiritual commandments of the Law 358, 488, 677–9; meaning of unclean in 580; as middle ground 671; observance of by Christians 662–5, 666–7. *See also* Jews; Old Testament; works of the Law
law of faith 24, 25–6, 273–4, 276; distinguished from law of works 273–5, 491, 511, 678–9; New Testament as 274
law of nature 24–5, 273–4, 276, 348, 577; distinguished from Mosaic law 358, 663 n1400, 737; encouragement of virtue by 742; in Noah's era 570–1; as preparation for justification 735–6, 745; universality of 394. *See also* nature
law of works 24–5, 276; distinguished from law of faith 273–4, 491, 511, 678–9
Lawrence, St 258
lay Christianity xiii–xv, lxxxv, lxxxviii. *See also* common (uneducated) people
Lee, Edward xxxvi, xxxvii, 100, 156, 293
- *Annotationes in annotationes Erasmi* 293 n1063
- *Annotationum libri duo* 156 n331
Lefèvre d'Etaples, Jacques lxxvii
Leipzig debate (1519) 6 n4, 164–5 nn370, 164 n368, 342
Lent 294 n1065
Leo I (the Great), St, pope 258 n883
Leoniceno of Vincenza, Niccolò 644
Leo X, pope xxx, xl, xlix–li, lxix
- *Exsurge Domine* (1520) xxxvii, xxxix, xli, xliii–xliv, xlvi, CWE 77 xi–xii, 79 n379, 242 n796, 300
leprosy, cure for 12 n32
Leviathan 398
liberation (distinguished from freedom) 718

liberty of the gospel 167
Liège, bishop of (Erard de la Marck) xxxiv n58
light: of faith 272–3, 491; of glory 221, 689, 709–10; of God's countenance 465; of grace 221, 689, 709, 721, 730; of nature 271–3, 275–6, 348, 684, 689–90, 709 (*see also* nature); scriptural passages on 218–19; of Scripture 709–10 (*see also* darkness: obscurity of Scripture as; Scripture: clarity of); of the spirit 684
limbo 745 n1732
Lips, Maarten xxxiv
Livy 115 n108, 260 n889
logic 200 n558, 378 n148, 390 n198
Longueil, Christophe de 98
– *Oratio ad Lutheranos quosdam iam damnatos* 98 n10
López Zúñiga, Diego (Stunica) 112 n93, 156 n333, 228 n715
lordship (of mankind) 348–9, 599, 613, 627
Lord's Prayer 455, 507, 511, 616, 647, 705
Louis XII, king of France 503
Louvain, University of xli, 207 n600; conservative theologians at xxxi, xxxiv, xl, xlviii–xlix
– *Acta* (Erasmus) xli–xlii
Lucian 105 n156, 112 n94
– *Auction of the Philosophers* 649 n1323
– *The Fisherman* 649 n1323
– *True History* 257, 258
Luciferians 245
Luciferus (bishop of Cagliari) 245 n811
Lucretius (philosopher-poet) 106 n60
– *De rerum natura* 707 n1600
Lufft, John (publisher at Wittenburg) lxxviii
lust 43, 167 n386, 699
Luther, Martin xxiii–xxxiv; acknowledgment of vehemence 631–2; acknowledgment of weakness and faults 637–9; as Augustinian friar 18 n55, 19 n59; called 'hyperbolic doctor' 355, 562; called 'Ludder' 606; change of view on free will 79, 280, 306, 446, 630; character of supporters 635; compared with Paul 631–5, 637; contradictions and inconsistencies 258, 349–50, 399, 612, 626, 627–8, 630–1; danger of his publications 114–15, 294–6, 608, 637, 642 n1301 (*see also* common [uneducated] people: effect of Luther's writing on); death of civ; excommunication of xxxv, xlvii, l; fame and notoriety of 255; German publications of 114, 156, 167, 175 n429, 228, 248, 300, 624 n1210, 640, 642, 644 (*see also* common [uneducated] people: effect of Luther's writing on); on invisible and inerrant church 210 n620; knowledge of Ockhamist theology xxiv, xxv n31, 51 n227; portraits of 302, 643; preference of world chaos to rejection of his teaching 185; reference to Erasmus as asp or viper 96 n1, 536 n789; as scholastic theologian xxiv, lxxxix, 121 n142, 520; Stoic elements in 729 n1688; as threat to humanist studies li; tower experience xxiv–xxv, xxv n31; use of distinctions 260, 494; use of paradox 19 n58, 108 n74; violent (vehement) style of writing xlvii–xlviii, lxi, lxxii, 98–100, 115, 141–2, 170, 254, 255–6, 293–5, 508–9, 631–2, 636–44, 712–15; youth and education xxiv
– *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* xxxvii
– *Adversus armatum virum Cokleum* 97 n6, 100 n23
– *An die Ratherren aller Stadte deutsches Lands* 131 n185, 143–4
– *Assertio* xlvi–xlvii, 6, 8, 300, CWE 77 xi–xii; article 36 cv, 300, 301–10; German translation of 175 n429, 300; pairing with Erasmus' texts lxxxvii, cv
– *Ein Brieff an die Christen zu Strassburg widder den schwermer geist* 113 n97
– *Compendiosa decem praeceptorum explanatio* 462 n511
– *Contra Henricum regem Angliae* 99 n20, 393 n209, 642 n1297

– correspondence: (with Conradus Pellicanus) 88, 138 n233; (with Duke George of Saxony) lvii, 109 n77, 138 n233; (with Erasmus) xxxii–xxxix, lxv–lxvii, lxxix, 96 n1, 100 n25, 103 n37, 110 n87, 641–2, 642 n1296; (with Michael Stifel) 96 n1; (with Nicolas Hausmann) lxxiv; (with Oecolampadius) lviii, lxv, 109 n77, 138 n233; (with Spalatinus) xxvi, xxvii, lvi–lvii, 138 n233
– *De abroganda missa privata Lutheri sententia* lx, 256 n875
– *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae* xxxvii, xlvi, liv n110, lvii, lx, 222 n688, 642 n1297
– *Decem praecepta Wittenbergensi praedicata populo* 462 n511
– *De servo arbitrio* lviii, lxxvii, lxxxiv; alleged collaboration of a lawyer in (Justus Jonas) 266; alleged collaboration of rhetoricians in (one unknown; Melanchthon) 103–5, 107 n64, 149, 150, 212–13, 442–3; as answer to Erasmus' *De libero arbitrio* lxxxiv; Erasmus' reaction to lxxxvii; German translation of (Justus Jonas) 228, 229 n719, 247–8; Luther's stance in 89 n405; pairing with Erasmus' texts lxxxvii, cv; publication of xxiv, lxxvii, lxxviii, 93, 99
– *Deutsche Messe und ordnung Gottis diensts* 180 n458
– *Dictata super Psalterium* xxv n31
– *Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam* xxv, xxvi, xxx
– German Bible (trans) 624 n1210
– *In epistolam Pauli ad Galatas commentarius* 109
– *Iudicium D. Martini Lutheri de Erasmo Roterodamo* lvii–lviii, 109 n77, 138 n233
– *Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans* xxv n31, 62 n296
– *Martin Luthers Antwort* 336 n7, 640 n1290, 641 n1293, 642 nn1297–1300, 644 n1302
– *Ninety-five Theses* xxx–xxxi, lxxiv, 85 n395
– *Operationes in psalmos* 130 n178, 236–7 nn763–70, 272 n954, 462 n512
– *Responsio Lutheriana ad condemnationem doctrinalem* 207 n600
– *Sermon von dem Sacrament des Leibs und Bluts Christi widder die Schwärmgeister* 258 n881
– *Tessaradecas consolatoria pro laborantibus et oneratis* 174 n426
– *Tractatus de libertate christiana* 167 n381
– *Wider die himmlischen Propheten, von den Bildern und Sacrament* 113 n97, 129 n173, 131 n182, 222 n688
– *Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern* 114 n105

Lutherans and Lutheran movement: attitude to Erasmus lxxi, lxxx; as brothers 99 n17, 105, 125, 640; on canonical texts of Scripture 14, 291–3, 344; condemnation of secular studies 131; dissension within 129 n172, 130–1, 143–4, 199, 235, 261, 609, 635; dissenting views of Eucharist lxxxiv, 98, 132, 133, 222, 256, 450, 635 n1269; effect on common people lxxiii; effect on humanist studies li, 294; Erasmus' preliminary arguments against (Ep 1342) lx–lxiv; Erasmus' rejection of xxviii, 144; Erasmus' rumoured support for lvi, lix, lx, lxxvii, lxxxiv, 101, 103, 111–12, 147, 228 n715, 247, 335, 639; as evangelicals 635; as religious 18 n56, 19 n59; role in Peasant's War 170–1, 640; varying interpretation of Scripture 130, 222, 225–6; violent repression of lxviii, lxxvi

Lycurgus (orator) 79

Lynceus 108

Lyon, First Council of (1245) 119 n132

Lyon, Second Council of (1274) 119 n132

Machiavelli, Niccolò CWE 76 xi

Maevius 426, 427

Manichaeus (Mani) and Manichaeans 15 n46, 245 n812; Augustine's connection to 16 n49, 245–6 n812, 716, 738; belief in two natures of man 15 n46, 16, 78, 373, 716; church Fathers accused of 484; condemnation of 16, 78, 250; denial of free will 15; emphasis on original sin ciii, 701, 704, 721; Erasmus' admonition to 746; Luther compared with 254, 695, 701, 704

Manilius, Marcus *Astronomica* 160 n351

mankind: body, soul, spirit in 585–98, 667, 681 (*see also below* as flesh); cannot ascribe justification to himself 667; choice between good and evil 26, 62, 286–7, 388; cooperates with God in single action 618–19; created with free will 190, 345–6; creation of 621–2; curiosity of 14 n40, 463, 525, 533, 551–2; debt to Redeemer of 592; deeds that please God 673; distinct from animals 190; diversity of temperament in 471–2; dominion (lordship) over lower affairs 346–50, 519, 599, 627, 693; drawn to God 66–7, 695–7; extinction of divine image in 273 n957; failure of 691; fall of 286–8, 338–9, 343, 350, 471–2, 506; fear of God in 506, 603, 736; as flesh 59, 60–2, 567–74, 585–98, 721 (*see also above* body, soul, spirit in); God and Satan in 188 n492, 473–4, 494, 596, 680; God's varying approaches to 411, 675–6, 748; God works in 13, 33, 64, 251, 470–1, 622–4; God works through 428, 622; honoured in creation by the Trinity 169 n390; image and likeness of God 83, 235 n758, 272–3; inclination to sin or evil in 59–60, 83, 287, 372–3, 468, 574–5, 684, 700, 732; inherent horror of vice in 700, 701; inherent seeds of virtue in 471, 700, 703, 712, 721, 732, 736, 742; instinct for self-preservation in 622, 623; knowledge distinguished from understanding in 128–9, 187; light of God's countenance imprinted on 273 n956; limitations of reason in 9, 182, 481–2, 499, 708, 734; natural condition of 190; natural powers of (as a grace) 743, (charity through) 744, (gift of God) 574, 667, 733, 739, 746, (good achieved through) 427, 595, 627, 742, (grace through) 341, 600–1, 646, 693, (insufficient for salvation) 667, 710, (knowledge through) 659, (salvation through) 648; preparation for kingdom of God 436–7; as rational animal 52 n234; rights of in relation to God 505; and Satan 383–4, 471–4, 475, 494, 584, 591, 596; sensitive appetite of 720; as servant 70–1; as sheep 696; similarity to animals 720; sons of wrath 468; struggle between good and evil in 702–3, 710–11; three stages of activity 67, 79–80; three types of activity in (nature, counsel, pleasure) 718, 719 n1647; turns toward wickedness 710, 736–7; universal wickedness of disputed 644–61; weakness assisted by spirit 73, 82; weakness distinguished from wickedness of 471, 567, 571–3, 584–5, 586, 591, 610

Manuzio, Aldo 538 n803

Marcion (heretic) 508

Marck, Erard de la (bishop of Liège) xxxiv n58

Marcus (Gnostic heretic) 508 n673

Marcus Antoninus (Marcus Aurelius) 588, 589 n1041

Marliano, Luigi xlvii

marriage 204, 209; of the apostles 177, 209, 721; in heaven 229 n723; pleasure in 572; and virginity 209

Martial (poet) 205 n587, 214 n641

martyrs 76, 150, 243, 258, 531

Mary, the Virgin (mother of Jesus) 574, 581 n998, 648, 654; faith of 152; immaculate conception of 10, 119, 480; perpetual virginity of 227 n714, 258, 716

mass 206 n596, 344. *See also* Eucharist

material goods 582

matins, divine office of 208 n608, 258 n883

Matthew, St (apostle) 530
Medea 592
Mela, Pomponius 9
Melanchthon, Philippus (Philip Schwarzerd) xxxii, 611; alignment with Luther 14 n41, 144, 164; alleged collaboration on *De servo arbitrio* 103–4 n44, 107 n64, 113 n99, 443 n447; correspondence with Erasmus xxxi, xxxvii, lxxi–lxxii, 143 n255; Erasmus' relations with lxxi–lxxii, lxxiv, lxxxvii, 14 n41, 61 n292, 206–7 n598, 583 n1011, 640; letter to Joachim Camerarius 206 n598; letter to Spalatinus lxxi; pseudonym (Commodus Britannicus) 109 n80; reference to Erasmus as asp 96 n1, 536 n789; response to Erasmus' *De libero arbitrio* lxxi–lxxii, 101, 109; on scriptural interpretation 225, 235
– *Commentarius in Genesin* 235 n758
– *De Luthero et Erasmo elogion* lxxi, lxxii, 110 n88
– *Loci communes rerum theologicarum* 112–14, 205
Melchisedek (king of Salem) 651
Meliboeus 609, 616
mendicant friars xxxv–xxxvi, xli
mental incapacitation 248–9, 339
merit 673–8, 724–8; distinguished from free gift of grace 673–4, 688; distinguished from preparation 738; God's foreknowledge of 436, 523–4; implied by reward 431–2, 674; kinds of 560–1; Luther's definition of 431–2; necessity excludes 57, 75, 460; preceding 430, 560, 577; relation to consequence 433; relation to grace 429, 433, 534, 674–5, 722, 724–8, 738–40, 743; of salvation or damnation 559–61; as wage or obligation 724, 727, 743. *See also facere quod in se est* doctrine; grace; reward; sinners: reward of; worth and worthiness
– condign merit (*meritum de condigno*) xcvi; distinguished from *meritum de congruo* 29 n106, 627 n1223, 674, 676–7, 688, 744; Scotus' view of 28 n103
– congruous merit (*meritum de congruo*) xcvi, 32 n119, 287, 505 n663, 732 n1694, 738; Biel's view of 78 n373; distinguished from *meritum de condigno* 29 n106, 627 n1223, 674, 676–7, 688, 744; Erasmus' view of lxxxii, xcvi–xcviii, c, 435 n408; Fisher's view of 627 n1223; fitness (*congruitas*) xcvii; proximity to Augustine's view 466 n534, 738–45; scholastics on xxv–xxvi, 270 n933, 505 n663, 688, 738, 745 n1731; Scotus' view of 28–9 nn103–104
Methuselah 121
Metsys, Quinten CWE 76 frontispiece
Midas 195
middle ground: in free will controversy 747–8; between God and Satan 590–1; between good and bad 671, 682; in grace 395, 397, 671–2; between wickedness and salvation 288, 579–80, 645, 730–3
Midianites 378
Minerva 520 n725, 663
Minos 389
miracles: interpretation of 409, 721–2; as proof 18–19, 199–202, 456; relation to free will 200, 253; relation to principal cause 50–1, 406
monks and monasticsm xiii–xv, 86, 294, 301 n63, 636–7
Montanus 238
Moravia 636 n1269
More, Thomas, St xxx, 98; correspondence with Erasmus lxxix–lxxxiv, lxxxvi, 336 n4; letter to Dorp 563 n910
– *Responsio ad Lutherum* 98 n7, 642 n1297
– *Utopia* 84 n291
Mosellanus, Petrus (Peter Schade) lvii
Moses 389, 418–19, 667, 713
Mota, Pedro Ruiz de la lii
Müntzer, Thomas 114 n104
Myrrah 592
mysteries: of Christianity 196–7, 481; of the Eucharist 173; of grace 717

n1643; of the sacraments 173–4, 469; of Scripture 132, 182, 196

Naples 730; Neapolitan Inquisition 252 n848
Narcissus 285 n1037
Nathaniel (disciple) 685
natural law. *See* law of nature
nature: actions of 406, 622; being according to 614; distinguished from grace 615; gift of 723; influx of (*influxum naturalem*) 31 n112, 340, 610, 615, 621 (*see also concursus generalis*); as part of man's activity 718, 719 n1647; powers of 672; as secondary cause 622; triads of 470 n549. *See also* law of nature; light: of nature
Nazarenes 684 n1499
Nebuchadnezzar 577
necessity lxxxii, 716–17, 720, 745; basis in God's will 51–2, 52 n234, 192, 420–6; danger of concept lxxxvii, xcv–xcvi, 12–13, 75, 136, 167, 180, 181, 227, 659, 680; of deed and of time 260; Diomodean 71; double (Manichaeism) 716; and exclusion of merit or reward 52, 57, 75, 76, 399, 428, 432, 460; exhortations meaningless under 36–8, 39–41, 55, 399, 400, 412, 505; God as cruel or unjust under 75–7, 82–4; infallible 514; Luther's position on lxix, 74, 184–7, 194 n524, 194 n542, 342, 428, 603; as opposed to contingency xciv, 159–60, 495, 496–8, 519–20, 710; relation to divine foreknowledge lxix, xciii–xciv, 48–50, 51–3, 150, 493–512, 513–20, 630; Wyclif's doctrine of 12 n35, 16, 45, 180 n460, 242 n796, 306, 627
- necessity of coercion 188, 512–13, 517, 605
- necessity of compulsion 260, 432 n396
- necessity of immutability 188, 260, 432, 494, 497, 512–20, 605, 720
- necessity of inevitability xciii, 494, 503, 513, 515
- necessity of the consequence lxvi, xciii, 52, 160, 493, 494–6, 499, 514, 517–20
- necessity of the consequent lxvi, xciii, 52, 160, 493, 494–6, 499, 514 n699, 517–20

Neoplatonic philosophy 122 n143, 297
Nero 617 n1174, 737
Nesen, Konrad 100 n24
- *Dialogus bilinguium ac trilinguium* 100 n24

Nesen, Wilhelm (William) lxxiv, 642 n1297; referred to as Wilheyl (Wilheylus) 99 n18, 100, 142, 640, 641, 642
New Testament: as law of faith 274; and the Old Testament 78, 187 n488, 274, 429, 688. *See also* gospel; Scripture
Nicaea, First Council of (325) 111 n92, 119 n132, 245 n811
Nicene Creed 119 n132, 224 n699
Nicholas of Lyra 568–9, 572
- *[Biblia] cum ... expositione lyre* 169 n390, 189 n495, 272 n954
- *Postilla super totam Bibliam* 569 n944, 572 n959. *See also* Scripture

Nicodemus 20, 590, 651, 685, 688–9
Nikolsburg (Moravia) 636 n1269
Nineveh (Assyria) 504, 655
Noah 570–4, 651
Nomentanus 393
nominalism xix n22, xxiv
nothing 64–5, 191, 605–8, 611–12, 614
Nürnberg 644 n1303

Ockham. *See* William of Ockham, Ockhamist theology
Octavius 707
Oecolampadius, Johannes (Johann Hussgen) lxv; association with Erasmus lviii, lxix; disagreement with Luther 98, 130, 132 n193, 143, 235; on the Eucharist 98, 98 n15, 133 n202, 222, 256 n877; interpretation of Scripture 225, 239, 424; knowledge of Hebrew 409 n285; Luther's letters to lvii, lxv, 109 n77, 138 n233
- *De genuina verborum Dei* 98 n14
- *In Iesaiam prophetam ... commentariorum* 236 n759, 425 n361

Old Testament: canonical texts of 291–3, 344; free will of authors 427; God of 78, 735 n1704; law in 429, 663 n1400; and New Testament 78, 187 n488, 274, 429, 688; salvation through good works xcii; Septuagint 33 n124, 96–7 n1, 425, 537 n795. *See also* law (ceremonial); Law (Mosaic); Scripture
Onesimus (slave) 632
Orange, Second Council of (529) 121 n141, 279 n997
oratory: declamation 221 n686, 224; mock debates 247
Origen of Alexandria (Origines Adamantius) xix, lxii, xcii n197, xcvii, 251, 484, 636; authority of 15, 350, 463, 483, 533; Erasmus' admiration for 252 n852; on free will 719; on God's cooperation with man 619, 620 n1186; heterodox teachings of 636 n1273; Luther's opinion of 456, 461, 467, 501, 550, 619; on Pharaoh 46–7, 456–7 nn493–4, 460 n504, 469, 475, 485; scriptural interpretation of xciv, 448, 449, 647, 702 n1575; on three parts of man (flesh, soul, spirit) 681; use of allegory 220 n679, 449
- *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos* 21 n69, 47–8 nn212–214, 52 n223, 501 n639, 502 n649, 647 n1319, 654 n1359, 663 n1400, 681 n1483
- *Commentarii in Matthaeum* 364 n100, 647 n1315
- *On First Principles* 21 n69, 46–7, 49 n222, 55 n250, 56–7, 65–6 nn318–320, 484

original sin. *See* sin, original
Orosius 210 n624
Ovid:
- *Amores* 707 n1598
- *Ars amatoria* 292 n1060
- *Metamorphoses* 203 n577, 285 n1037, 378 n146, 591 n1052, 592 n1055, 617 n1173
- *Tristia* 417 n329

Oxford, University of 12 n35, 123 nn147–8
pacifism 636 n1269
pagans and paganism: concept of gods among 736; concept of immortality among 707–8; concept of sin among 737; difficulty of instructing 736; laws of 273, 366, 650; morally good works of 589, 648–9, 672; piety among 584; possible renewal of xxix; reason in 592–4; removed from the gospel 275; salvation for 273; virtue in c, 359, 575, 734–8. *See also* gentiles
pain (of loss or of the senses) 745
Pandora 266
papacy: authority and primacy of 86, 179, 205, 228, 230, 230 n727; decrees on free will 347, 349–50; dispensations from xii–xiii, 294; Erasmus' loyalty to lxi–lxii, lxxxviii; Erasmus' relations with lii–liv, 179; Luther's repudiation of xxviii; as secular ruler xxii. *See also* Adrian VI; Boniface I; Clement VII; Gregory the Great, St; Julius II; Leo I (the Great), St; Leo X
parables: labourers in vineyard 40, 68; prodigal son 72; talents 559–60, 726; unjust steward 70; wedding banquet 560, 726
Paris, University of xiii, xx, xxxix; Collège de Montaigu at lxxxii n169, 280 n1003, 520 n725; condemnation of Luther by 638; conservative theologians at lxxvii, lxxx, lxxxiii; Erasmus' studies at xiii, xx, 121 n142, 520 n725; Ockhamist theologians at 123 n148; Pierre D'Ailly at 11 n30; Scotist theologians at xiii, xx, 123 n147, 280 n1003
Patroclus 103, 104 n45
Paul, St: acknowledges imperfection 234; acting of God within 748; apostolic diligence of 632–3; Augustine's study of 79, 271, 738; called by God 675; certainty 603; as champion of grace 42; citations from Old Testament in 418, 652–3; contrasted with Luther 631–3; conversion of 555, 670, 681, 683, 748; elected by God 461; error of

in persecuting the church 209, 681, 683; figurative interpretation of Scripture in 462; instruction through Ananias 713; as least of apostles 71; on marriage 204, 632; in persona of sinner 701–2; preached only Christ crucified 196, 421, 633; on prophets and prophecy 233–4; on pseudoprophets 473; rebuke of Peter 663 n1401; seeming contradiction in writings of 56, 69–70; style of preaching 360–1; teaching and speaking in the spirit 619, 620 n1186; on teachings of philosophers 272, 539, 587; in third heaven 633; on three parts of man 585–98, 667, 681; use of the name God 413–14
Paulus de Santa Maria 169 n390
pearls before swine 173, 177, 212
Peasant's War 114 n102, 130 n180, 170–1, 248, 294 n1065, 640 n1288
Pelagius and Pelagians xxvii n38, ciii, 63 n300, 268, 284, 382, 578 n984; as almost evangelical 271–2, 275; Augustine's writings against lxxxi–lxxii, xcvii, cii, 79, 210 n624, 251 n846, 272 n947, 279 n997, 344, 345 n38, 629, 717 n1643; condemnation of 278, 341, 677, 700; on free will 23, 63 n300, 268, 379–80; on grace 29 n104, 281, 341; as heresy 407, 420 n340; Jerome's writings against 63 n300, 210 624, 600, 619 n1183; lack of documentation 724; on original sin 700, 720–1; on relation of free will to grace 27, 32, 78 n373, 86, 723. *See also* free will: overemphasis on
Pellicanus, Conradus 88, 138 n233
Pentecost 590
perfect, teaching among 200, 421, 633
perfection: of disciples 364–5; of God 365
perfect justice 369
perfect will 745
Peripatetics 465, 593
permissive will (of God) 516
Peter, St (apostle) 173, 308, 560, 634, 663 n1401, 666, 672; dream of 580 n997; interpretation of Isaiah 40:6–7 583–4; mother-in-law of 209 n615, 721
Peter Lombard xlii, 159 n343, 264, 592 n1054
– *Sententiae in quatuor libris distinctae* 36 n142, 122 n144, 264 n903; cited 11 n29, 132 n196, 190 n502, 204 n585, 264 n203, 382 n160, 412 n300, 719 n1653, 741 n1720, 745 n1732; commentaries on xxv, 28 n103, 30 n110, 122 n144, 168 n390
Peter of Spain 190 n501, 201 n567
– *Tractatus Called Afterwards Summule Logicales* 190 n501
Petrarch xiv, xvi n16, xx
– *De otio religioso* xx n23
Petrus Comestor 169 n390
Peutinger, Konrad xlv
Phaedria 592
Pharaoh: free will of 280, 338, 649, 719; hardening of heart of 46, 52, 447, 455–60, 486, 515 n702; Luther's explanation of 475–6, 478–80; punishment of 49, 485, 487, 489, 528–9; wickedness of 468
pharisaic justification 667, 670
Pharisees 439, 531, 670, 683, 735; arrogance of 358; observation of Law 395, 397; questioning of 549, 689–90
Philip, St (apostle) 670
philosophers: among the gentiles 488; on the cause of historical events 5 n3; concept of God 25, 29–30, 203, 273, 340, 421, 464–5, 465; concept of good and evil 61, 340, 472–3, 587, 737–8; concept of the human spirit 594; corruption of 647, 649; on divine justice 707–8; on free will 203, 609, 716, 717; heresies arising from 450; impelling grace offered to 459, 465; lack of justification of 488, 582, 585, 646–7, 683; law of nature in 394; light of nature in 275, 689–90; morally good works of 737–8; particular grace in 588; reason of 464–5, 593; relation of teachings to Christianity 203–4, 272–3, 275–6, 587–9, 668; similarity to prophets 735

philosophia Christi xxxiv
philosophy: Aristotelian 152 n308; Neoplatonic 122 n143, 297; *philosophia Christi* xxxiv; scholastic 586 n1029, 588 n1039
Phocion (Athenian statesman) 588, 589 n1041, 708
Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni lxxviii n163
– *De ente et uno* 473 n556
Pilate, Pontius 659
Pio, Alberto, prince of Carpi lxxvii–lxxviii, lxxxiv
– *Accurate and Horatory Response to Erasmus* lxxviii
– *Twenty-three Books against Passages in Various Works of Erasmus* lxxviii
Pirckheimer, Willibald li, lvi, lxviii, 644
Plato 588 n1036; on body and soul 203, 593, 621
– *Apology* 61 n289, 203 n578, 708 n1604
– *Crito* 61 n289
– *Laws* 285 n1029
– *Letters* 75 n362
– *Phaedo* 593 n1057
– *Protagoras* 86 n398
– *Republic* 270 n935
– *Symposium* 540 n810
– *Timaeus* 203 n577
Plautus *Miles gloriosus* 416 n320, 484 n592, 516 n705, 581 n1002
pleasure 718, 719 n1647; in marriage 572
Pliny the Elder 720
– *Naturalis historia* 125 n159, 203 n573, 230 n731, 707 n1600, 720 n1655
Pliny the Younger 267
– *Epistles* 191 n507, 486
Plutarch:
– *Cicero* 707 n1603
– *Demosthenes* 707 n1602
poets and poetry (pagan) 5 n3, 449, 592–3, 737; Luther's citations of 160–1, 609, 717
Pomponazzi, Pietro *De immortalitate animae* 161 n354
Porphyrius (roommate of Jerome) 735 n1704
Porphyry (Porphyrios) 297
Posilipo 730
Potitianus (Roman civil servant) 271
poverty 599 n1082
prayer 206 n596, 737, 739–40, 745 n1733; Lord's 455, 507, 511, 616, 647; public 650 n1330
predestination lxix, 48, 122, 136, 428, 435, 461, 516, 710. *See also* foreknowledge, divine
preliminary opposition 385 n172, 416
prepositions, meaning of (in the interpretation of Deut. 30:11–14) 416–19
Prierias, Sylvester xxx, xxxix, xliii
priests and priesthood: authority of 85–6; corruption within 636; vows of 86, 636–7; weakness of the flesh in 636–7
prime matter 284
principal forms 735
Procne 592
promises 274, 486, 488–90, 505, 682, 688, 691; commandments and 274, 429–31, 442; conditional 400–1; proof of free will as 400–1, 429–31; of salvation 422–3, 488–9, 561
prooemia from kairos [occasion] 538 n803
prophecies: about Jews and gentiles 490; of Christ 218, 597, 688–9; gift of 233–4; obscurities of 218; prophets' control of 44, 566; scriptural interpretation as 234; on timespan of the Law 666
prophets: of Baal 202; commands of 35 n132; first gives way to second 129, 234, 566; free will of 566; and the philosophers 735; pseudoprophets 473, 498; seduction of 473, 477; Zwickau 144 n259
proselytes 684
Prosper of Aquitaine 380 n154
Proteus 109 n83, 240 n786
providence, divine 62–4, 598–601, 735
Pseudo-Ambrose. *See* Ambrose, St (of Milan), works attributed to
pseudoapostles 670
pseudoprophets 473, 498

public prayers 650 n1330
public tranquillity 635, 640
Publilius Syrus *Sententiae* 725 n1670
punishment (for sin) 42, 52, 59, 369, 381, 576–9
purgatory 85, 119

Quintilian 160
– *Institutio oratoria* 107 n63, 148 n286, 171 n400, 202 n570, 221 n686, 346 n45, 366 n106

reason 591–5; ability to distinguish good from evil 286–7; in Adam and Eve 22–3; corrupt 61, 591; darkened by sin 23–4, 23 n78, 26–7, 286–7, 290, 465, 594; light of 24; moral force of 592–3, 594; natural 250 n840, 272 n954, 593, 702; not necessarily wicked 586, 591; outrun by emotion 102; of philosophers 591; power of choice derived from 24 n81; relation to free will 23–7, 264, 703; relation to spirit 593–4; role in habit of sinning 702–3; as ruling principle 61; as spirit 593; weak rather than wicked 591
Rebecca (wife of Isaac) 523, 524, 526, 528, 529–30
rebirth (of mankind) 61–2, 586–7; action of the spirit in 622–3; continual 624; distinguished from birth xcv, 623–4; enables free will to do good 720; gradual process 624, 687, 730–1; from immortal seed 584; other terms for 624; as resurrection 721–2; role of free will in 624 n1211, 686–7; similarity to human coition 686–7; in spirit or in flesh 595–6
Reformation, Protestant xii n1, 86 n397; Counter-Reformation lxxviii n163
regulations, human 180
repentance: afflictions lead to 485; God's mercy for 46–7, 48; during the interval before the Flood 60, 569–70, 575; link to grace 153, 733; never-ending opportunities for 732; relation to free will 59–60, 407, 408, 411. *See also* sin or wickedness
resurrection 161; rebirth as 721–2
Reuchlin, Johann xxxvi, xl, xlii, xlviii, 409 n285
reward: for all who are called 560; of eternal life 75; implies merit 431–2, 674; link to free will 80; Luther's concept of 432–3, 434; necessity excludes 52, 57, 399, 428. *See also* merit; worth and worthiness
Rhegius, Urbanus 443 n447, 638 n1280
Rhenanus, Beatus 143 n255
rhetoric: decorum 171 n400; Greek 538; part of *trivium* 200 n558, 390 n198; prooemia from kairos [occasion] 538 n803. *See also* commonplace
Rhetorica ad Herennium 171 n400
right(s): acquired by sin 703; distinguished from free will 693; of mankind's lordship 458–9, 599; of possession 201 nn568–9
righteousness: distinctions in meaning of 728; as free gift 711; imperfect 672; Law as preparation for 736; *simul iustus et peccator* (at once righteous and a sinner), Luther's doctrine of lxix, 37 n149, 62 n296, 84 n391, 626 n1119
Ripheas 273 n959
Roman empire 570, 575
Roman synod (444) 246 n812
Ross (Guilielmus Rosseus, pseudonym of Thomas More) 98
ruling principle 61

Sabbatarians 636 n1269
sacraments: legitimacy of xlvi, lvi n110; as mysteries 173–4, 649. *See also* church (Catholic): liturgy
Sadducees 229
saints 85, 212, 231, 260, 384; abolition of images of 130, 143; human errors of 207–8, 231; identification of 210–14
Sallust *De conspiratione Catalinae* 148 n289
Salutati, Coluccio xiv
salvation. *See* justification and salvation
Samos, island of 54 n245
Sanhedrin 69

Sarah (wife of Abraham) 462, 523, 528
Satan (Lucifer): as angel of light 255; angels of 238; as Belial 309, 586; blamed by Luther for scriptural obscurity 240–1; cited Scripture 500; and corruption of the will 22, 190; God's role for 63; kingdom (reign) of 383–4, 474, 584, 590–1, 652, 680, 699–706; and mankind 471–2, 475; and original sin 373, 507; as rider of the human soul 188 n492; warfare of 577; works with God in an evil deed according to Luther 473–4, 494, 596. *See also* demons
Saul 536, 540
scepticism lxxxviii, 7, 117–29, 214; among scholastic theologians 121; in Bugenhagen's writings 236; definition of 128; distinguished from assertions 118, 119–20, 126, 127, 130; on doctrinal issues 119, 121, 128; Erasmus excludes Scripture from 118–19, 124, 127–8
scholasticism, scholastic theologians xvii–xix, xxii, xxiv–xxvi, lxxxii n169, 23 n77, 259–60, 262 n897, 378 n148, 385 n172, 402, 586 n1029; called sophistry 11 n28, 156–7, 204, 260, 269, 378 n148; Erasmus' familiarity with lxxxix, 121 n142, 520 n725; Erasmus' view of xiv–xix, xxii, xc, xciv, 402, 621; Luther's familiarity with xxiv–xxvi, lxix, lxxxix; Luther's view of xxiv–xxvi, lxix, 156–7, 204, 269, 402, 677; methods and terms of xxii, 260, 262 n897, 385 n172; problems related to free will disputed among 28 n102, 50–1, 121, 160, 496 n628, 503, 516; university trained 121 n142. *See also* theology
- *via moderna*: distinguished from *via antiqua* lxxxii n169, ci, 50 n226; Erasmus' admonition to ciii, 746–7; *facere quod in se est* (grace is not denied to those who do the best they can) doctrine lxiv, ci, 32 n119, 341, 380, 388, 396, 434, 505, 561 n901, 601, 627 n1223; on free will xc–xci, xcvi, 420 n340, 627; on *meritum de congruo* lxxxii, xcvi–xcviii, 270 n933, 505 n663, 627, 645 n1307, 688, 738, 745 n1731; trinitarian controversies among 745 n1731

Schott, Johann (Strasbourg publisher) lxiv, lxv
science xvii, xviii
Scipio Africanus, Publius 191 n507
Scotus, John Duns, and Scotist theology xix, lxxxii n169, xc, 15, 123 n147, 164; on Adam's sin 23 n77; Erasmus' knowledge of xiii, xix, xx, lxxxii n169; Luther's citation of 402; on merit through morally good works 28–9 n103, 68 n326, 279, 280 n1003, 281 n1008, 288 n1046, 580, 614 n1160, 620 n1188; on the relation of grace to free will 28–9, 79 n377, 86, 151, 284, 611; the 'subtle doctor' 123 n147, 156, 562 n904
- *God and Creatures* 68 n326
- *Ordinatio (Commentarium Oxoniense in quatuor libros Sententiarum)* 23 n77, 28 n103, 719 n1653, 745 n1732
- *Reportata Parisiensia* 28 n103, 30 n110. *See also* grace: special grace; theology

Scribes 439, 670, 683
Scripture: Apocrypha 22, 291–3; canon of 14, 22, 291–3, 344, 716; clarity of 214–35, 220, 226, 238, 240, 253, 254, 260 (*see also* darkness; light: of Scripture); comparison of passages in 463, 553–4, 562, 563–4; Complutensian Polyglot 156 n333; concordances of 219 n669; corruption in manuscripts of 226, 239; deuterocanonical texts of 291 n1059, 292 n1062; English translation of 12 n35; excessive curiosity about 140, 492, 506, 509 (*see also* Christianity: inquiry into the mysteries of); excluded by Erasmus from his 'Scepticism' 118–19, 124, 127–8; free will in authors of 427; generalizations in 369, 370–2, 574, 646–7, 650, 654–5, 660–1; German translation of 624 n1210; grammar of 353–4 (*see also* figures of speech); hagiographa 292; Hebrew

text mentioned 397 n219, 574–5, 577; inviolable authority of 7, 16, 120; inviolable majesty of 58; knowledge of God through 706; light of 709–10; limitation to human understanding of 8–9, 133, 134–5, 136, 182, 220; mutability of God in 38–9; praise of the Law in 362; as primary authority 16, 198; questions arising from 135, 166–7, 180, 482–3, 492; reverent study of 482–3; role of in Christian life xvi, 178 nn446–7; role of in scholastic theology xviii; senses of 53 n240, 220 n679, 544 (*see also* allegory, allegorical; figures of speech); Septuagint 33 n124, 96–7 n1, 425, 537 n795, 577 n982; translations from Hebrew in 574–5, 577; Vulgate 3, 22 n70, 96 n1, 111 n90. *See also Glossa ordinaria*; gospel; New Testament; Nicholas of Lyra; Old Testament

– interpretation of ciii–civ, 57–8, 197–214, 235–61; according to common sense 353–4, 422, 431, 609, 655; according to context xcii, 70–2, 360, 423–4, 498, 538, 576, 677, 749; according to grammar 219, 221, 232, 233, 239, 451, 609 (*see also* language); controversies over words 747; figurative language in 38–9, 239–40, 431, 447–69, 475, 540, 572, 722 (*see also* figures of speech; language); heresies arising from 382; literal interpretations discussed 53 n240, 56, 58, 64–5, 87–8, 417, 419, 450, 455, 562; Luther's claims of authority in 176, 180–1, 205, 234, 350, 391–2, 446–7, 609; variation among Lutherans 130, 222, 225–6; variations in lxxxvi, 74, 130, 181, 214, 215, 382–3, 391–2

– obscurity of lxxxviii, xc, 8–9, 129–35, 195–6, 214–61; contradictions in 226, 416, 562, 565; as darkness 233, 239; inconsistencies in 147, 240, 747–8; internal distinguished from external 135; Luther's admission of 226, 236–8; Luther's denial of 129–35, 196; reasons for 131, 134, 216, 220, 226, 239–40

Scylla and Charybdis (metaphor) lxiii, lxv, lxxxiii, 87, 117–18, 140–6

Scythians 25

self-preservation (instinct) 622, 623

Seneca lxxx, 588, 650

– *De beneficiis* 650 n1330

– *De clementia* 650 n1330

– *Epistulae morales* 97 n4, 191 n508, 650 n1330, 708 n1605, 743 n1724

Seriphian frogs 203 n573

sermons: accommodation to audience 171–84, 195–6, 374, 633; for common people 166–7, 195–6; errors in 183; lurid 167 n386. *See also* accommodation, principle of; speech

Serpent 23, 476

servant, mankind as 70–1

sheet anchor 423

Shimei 477, 748

Simeon, St 581 n998, 664

similes and metaphors: all flesh is grass 60, 581–5, 597; child running for apple 66, 80–1; God working with man 618–19; grace as light 730–3; Luther's scorn of 625–6; mule as Christian convert 189 n497; mule as human will 188 n492, 189 n495; not every feature applies 55, 551, 552, 557–8, 564, 565, 618, 624, 722; patient and physician 731; potter and clay 54–6, 548–58, 562, 564, 626; sailor and ship 618–19. *See also* figures of speech

simul iustus et peccator (at once righteous and a sinner), Luther's doctrine of lxix, 37 n149, 62 n296, 84 n391, 626 n1119. *See also* justification and salvation: Luther's doctrine of; sin or wickedness

sin, original: darkens reason 23–7, 286–7, 290, 465, 594, 710–11; denied by Pelagians 700; distinguished from habit of sinning 702; distinguished from personal sin 372–3, 474, 610, 662; emphasized by Manichaeus ciii, 700, 704, 721; as man's imitation of

Adam 704; Mary's freedom from 10 n27, 119 n132; overemphasis on 84, 373, 468, 474, 507, 700–1, 704, 710–11, 716, 721, 746; removed by baptism 287, 381, 578; removed by circumcision 372, 662; role of God in 476; scriptural basis for doctrine of xxvi, xxvii n38, xxxvii

sinners (the wicked): ability to request and accept grace 288, 352 n62, 356, 395–6, 435, 681; accepted by Luther's gospel 634; afflictions of 485; cannot blame God 347, 348, 380, 458, 693, 709–10; conversion of 381, 411; damnation of 132, 422–3, 425–6, 434, 560, 561; free will of 53, 290, 340–1, 460, 701, 736; God does not will death of 407–11, 693; God's anger against 407–8; good works of 627 n1223, 682; interpretative will of 435; not necessarily slaves to sin 288; Paul's speech in persona of 701–2; reward (merit) of 675 (*see also* merit); salvation of 560, 561; struggle between good and evil in 702–3

sin or wickedness: acknowledgment of 359; blasphemy the unforgiveable 10 n24, 131, 154; distinguished from lack of justification 736; excused if committed out of madness 248; forgiveness for 439–40, 441; God's use of 469, 604; good action and substance in 474; habit of 468, 471, 480, 485, 700, 702–3; impenitence the unforgiveable (Luther) 153; knowledge of 359, 648, 737; knowledge of through the Law 356, 357–68, 382, 388–9, 391, 395–6, 397, 439, 578–9, 669; mankind's inherent inclination to 83, 287, 468; mortal 396; of nations 368; by necessity according to Luther 547 n841; not generated by God 469; occasional circumstance of 531; punishment for 42, 52, 369; as punishment for earlier sin 381; reasons for turning to 736–7; right of (by habit of sinning) 703; slavery to 281, 288; venial 396; vicious education a source of 700, 736–7; voluntary nature of 26. *See also* repentence; *simul iustus et peccator*

slaves and slavery 77; Christian 632; distinguished from freedom 190, 263, 289, 339; as masters' tools 56; relation to necessity 286; to sin 281, 288

Słechta, Jan xxxvi

Socrates 450, 465, 588, 707–8, 737

Sogdians 249

soldiers 77, 146 n268, 635 n1262, 635 n1264. *See also* war and insurrection

Solomon (king of Israel) 121, 536

sons of God 441, 572, 585, 685–7

soul 585, 593–4, 667, 681; emergence of 731; immortality of 161 n354, 203; Luther's image of two riders (God and Satan) 142 n246, 145, 281 (*see also* will [human]: as mule ridden by God and Satan); relation to body 61, 136, 190 n504, 203, 735 n1703

Spalatinus, Georgius lxxi, 642 n1297; Erasmus' letters to xxxvii–xxxviii, 663 n1399; Luther's letters to xxvi–xxvii, lvi–lvii, 138 n233

speech: accommodation to audience lxxxix, 171–84, 373, 633, 749 (*see also* accommodation, principle of); as light 218; ordinary human 353–4, 357, 387; Spirit speaking through human 66, 69; unseasonable 174–5. *See also* language; sermons

spirit (human): distinguished from flesh 585–9, 699–706; of error 260; philosophers on 594; as reason 593, 594

Spirit (of Christ) 20, 75, 406, 591–2

Spirit (of God, Holy): in the apostles and good men 69–70, 199–200, 590; assists man's weakness 73, 82; blasphemy against the 10 n24, 131; distinguished from human flesh 566–74; distinguished from human spirit 61; as kindness 567; Paul's speaking in 619, 620 n1186; possession of 581 n998; revelation 18, 215, 240; secret whistling of 287, 729; twelve

gifts of 700; in the understanding of scriptural obscurities 235–61
spirits, wicked. *See* demons
spiritualists 131 nn184–5
spiritus (breath) 567 n934
Stephen, St 69, 523
Stifel, Michael 96 n1
Stoics and Stoicism 118; Chrysippus 265; on emotions 593; on good and evil 465, 729, 737; on good in mankind 62 n297; Marcus Aurelius 589 n1041; on misery and happiness 708, 709; paradoxes of 19 n58, 734; on reason 61 n288
Storch, Nicholas 144 n259
Stübner, Marcus Thomas 144 n259
studia humanitatis. See humanism and humanist movement
subjunctive mood (verbs) 426–7, 445, 453, 511, 562, 563, 566, 571, 629
suicide 622
synderesis 592
synecdoche 584

Tarquin 247
Ten Commandments (Decalogue) xxvi, 462, 563, 662, 702
Terence
– *Adelphi* 268 n925
– *Andria* 641 n1295
– *Eunuchus* 99 n21, 124 n153, 446 n457, 592 n1054
– *Heautontimorumenos* 295 n1069, 639 n1283
Tertullian (Septimus Tertullianus) 15, 238, 719
– *Adversus Marcionem* 78 n370
– *De carne Christi* 407 n270
Tetzel, Johann xxx
Theodosius II, emperor 297
theology: Erasmus' approach to xvii–xxiii, lxxxv–lxxxvi, 165–6; ordinary human speech in 353–6; theological topics unsuitable for common discussion 11–14, 120–3, 129, 136, 146–71, 194–7, 227. *See also* Erasmus: humanist theology of; Erasmus: and scholasticism; Erasmus: theological method confused with Luther's; Erasmus: and the *via moderna;* humanism and humanist movement; scholasticism, scholastic theologians; Scotus, John Duns, and Scotist theology; Trinity, trinitarian theology; William of Ockham, Okhamist theology
Theophylact of Ochrida: on Antichrist 412–13; as authority 15, 463, 483, 492, 501, 555, 668
– *Commentarius in epistolam ad Galatas* 663 n1400, 668 n1430
– *Commentarius in secundum epistolam ad Timotheum* 555 n873
– *Expositio in epistolam ad Romanos* 418 n331, 463 n516, 534 n783, 663 n1400
– *Expositio in epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses* 412 n302
Thomas Aquinas, St xvi, xix, xlii, lxxxii n169, 15, 50 n226, 151–2 n308, 412; on Adam's state before the Fall 742 n1720; the 'angelic doctor' 562 n904; on free will 32 n122, 151, 193 n521, 278, 284, 289, 645 n1307
– *Catena aurea* 70 n342, 72 n356, 721 nn1657–8
– *Catena aurea in Matthaeum* 364 n100
– *De potentia* 193 n521
– *De veritate* 152 n308
– *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi* 122 n145, 132 n196, 588 n1039, 719 n1653, 745 n1732
– *Summa theologiae*: on angels 719 n1653; on Antichrist 412–13 n302; on contraries 190 n501; on the Eucharist 245 n810, 392 n203; on free will 152 n308, 190 n502, 290 n1057, 719 n1653; on the habit of faith 287 n1045; on hell 132 n196; on the hypostatic union 221 n684; on lust 167 n386; on the primary cause 80 n382, 193 n521; on sin 195 n528, 248 n830; on Trajan 273 n959, 588 n1039; on the Virgin Mary 227 n714
Thomas More, St. *See* More, Thomas, St
Thomas of Erfurt 563 n910

Thraso 99, 446 n457
Thrasonicus 443 n447
Thrasybulus (Athenian statesman) 443, 638
Timothy (circumcision of) 632, 664
Todischus, Thomas xliii
tongues, gift of 233
Trajan 273 n959, 588 n1039
transubstantiation 119, 222 n688
Trent, Council of 291 n1059
Trinity, trinitarian theology 10 n26, 119 n132, 122, 132, 224 n699, 481, 649; blasphemy against the 131; Catholic consensus on 119, 124; discussion of limited to scholars 11, 168; *homoousios* 111 n92, 119; interior action of God's will in 158 n341; Old Testament awareness of 168–9 n390. *See also* theology
trivium 200 n558, 390 n198
Trutfetter, Jodocus xxiv, xxv
truth: expediency in speaking 12, 14, 171–84 (*see also* accommodation, principle of); of God 187; God's judgment according to 42; as light 218; relation to dialectic 689; veiled by allegory 220 n679
Tunstall, Cuthbert (bishop of London) lxx, lxxix, lxxx, lxxxiii
Turkey 249 n832, 635
Twelve Tables 365

Ulysses 116
'unclean' (meaning of) 580
understanding: distinguished from faith 151, 187; distinguished from knowledge 128–9, 187
unworthiness 724–7, 739, 743. *See also* merit; worth and worthiness
Uriah 568

Valdès (Waldo), Peter 494
Valentinus (Valentinian, a Pelagian) lxxxii, 380, 457, 466, 508, 626, 744
Valla, Lorenzo 15–16 n48, 252 n848; on free will 15, 16 n48, 48, 162, 250, 252; as humanist xvi n16, xx, xxiii n28; on lay Christianity xiv
– *Adnotationes in Novum Testamentum* xx n23, 15 n48
– *Collatio Novi Testamenti* xx n23
– *De libero arbitrio dialogus* 15 n48, 48 n218, 52 n233, 83 n387, 162 n356, 450 n474
– *Elegantiae linguae Latinae* 15 n48
– *Repastinatio dialectice et philosophie* xx n23
Vatinius, Publius 450
Vertumnus 116, 206, 587
via antiqua lxxxii n169, ci, 50 n226
via moderna. *See* scholasticism, scholastic theologians: *via moderna*
viper (or asp) 96 n1, 536 n789
Virgil 204, 680; distinguished from Maevius 426, 427; Luther's citation of 148, 160–1, 177 n440, 204, 609 n1130
– *Aeneid* 160 n351, 169 n393, 177 n440, 249 n836, 268 n922, 285 n1032, 592 n1055, 616 n1170
– *Eclogues* 609 n1130, 616 n1171
– *Georgics* 148
virginity 136, 209
virtue: in animals 468; habit of 394, 708; mankind's inherent tendency towards 286, 593–6, 700, 703, 712, 721, 732, 736; of pagans c, 575, 734–8; striving for effective or ineffective 281, 286, 459
Vitrier, Jean xv
Volz, Paul xiv, xvi, lxxxv
vows (religious) 86, 294, 636–7

Walafrid Strabo 721 n1657
– *Glossa ordinaria* (attrib) 69 n331, 72 n356, 233 n747, 721 n1657, 721 n1658
Waldensian heresy 494 n622
Waldo (Valdès), Peter 494
Waldshut (Breisgau) 130 nn180–1, 143 n256
war and insurrection 634 n1264, 640; Peasant's War 114 n102, 130 n180, 170–1, 294 n1065, 640 n1264. *See also* soldiers
Warham, William l, lxx
weakness: distinguished from wickedness 568, 571–3, 584–5, 586,

591, 610; of the flesh 129, 568, 636–7; God's assistance for 402; of intellect 129, 232
wickedness. *See* sin or wickedness
Wilheyl(us). *See* Nesen, Wilhelm
will (human): cannot be forced 719; concept of absolute act of willing 283–4; effective or ineffective 281, 286, 459; free but not always good 719; free in a qualified way 190 n504; as gift of God 471, 506, 598; imperfect distinguished from perfect 745; interpretative (of sinners) 435; as mule ridden by God or Satan 188 n492 (*see also* soul: Luther's image of two riders); prepared for grace by God and mankind 734; primary or secondary 153; vitiated by sin 282. *See also* free will
will (of God) xciii; absolute xciii, 52 n234, 158, 499, 503–4; adoration of xciii, 413 n304, 455, 481–2 (*see also below* hidden or inscrutable); alone truly free 263; applied to internal actions or external things 158 n341; conditional 52 n234, 158, 499, 503–4, 516, 710; distinctions of 516; efficacious 158, 343, 412–13, 414, 494, 516, 520; general distinguished from individual acts of 158–9 n343; hidden or inscrutable xciii, 342 n25, 412 n302, 415, 419, 420–6, 422–3 (*see also above* adoration of); ordained 51; permissive 516; primary or secondary 153; relation to divine foreknowledge 499–500 (*see also* foreknowledge, divine); relation to human will 49, 66, 69, 153; revealed 412 n300, 412 n302; seems to impose necesssity 49, 51–2, 52 n234, 420–6; signified 51, 158, 412–13, 414, 494, 516, 710; total submission to 74–5, 82–3. *See also* God
William of Ockham, Ockhamist theology xix, xxv, lxxxii n169, 28 n103, 51 n227, 123 n148, 201 n567, 280 n1003; influence on Luther xxiv, xxv n31, 51 n227; at Oxford and Paris 123 n148. *See also* theology
wisdom 582; animal 582; divine or spiritual 8–9, 421, 582, 633, 680; of the flesh 582, 585, 680–1; human 582; of the world 582
Wittenberg: Augustinians at xxiv; Christian II visit to 642 n1297; John Lufft (publisher) lxxviii; Luther's circle at 14 n41, 225 n706, 229 n719; Luther's sermons at 130 n182; University of xxiv, xxxi, 6 n4, 113 n97
Wolsey, Thomas, Cardinal lxx
women: daughters of men 572; faith of 708; forbidden to leave husbands 632; looked down on 733; marriage of 177, 204, 209, 572, 721; not blamed for rape 26; should pray for unborn children 745 n1733; as unclean 580; and virginity 209
word(s): controversies over 693, 724, 738, 740, 743, 744, 747; made flesh 221
word of God: abides forever 584; divided into Law and gospel 266; not bound 172, 175
work 470–1; belief as 441
works, (morally) good 29–30, 282; apart from grace 671 n1441; of Augustine in pre-Christian life c, 738; basis of in faith and charity 727; God's role in 436–7, 438–9, 622; grace through 32, 270, 280, 287, 288, 289, 395–6, 434, 578, 627 n1223; justifying grace through 78, 466, 580, 614, 738; man does something in 436–7, 438–9; of pagans 648–9; as preparation for grace and justification 60, 670–2, 682–3, 711, 737, 738–9; primary and secondary reasons for 589; role of free will in 711; role of reason in 592–3; salvation through xcii, 270, 561; in teaching of philosophers 587–9, 735; value of 737
works of charity 625
works of the flesh 43, 699
works of the Law: external 662, 666, 679, 727; and faith 678–9; include the Decalogue and ceremonial law 662; as natural law 663 n1400; relation

to grace 677; relation to justification 362, 662. *See also* law (ceremonial); Law (Mosaic)
world 595, 683–5; Christ as not of 694; Christ not recognized by 685; gospel spread throughout 607; wisdom of 582
Worms, Diet of xlvii, l, lxxvi, 111 n93
worth and worthiness 434–5; of congruence 434–5; distinguished from unworthiness 724–6; as divine predestination 435; fitting 435 n408; of general grace of gospel 435; God's complete knowledge of 675; of justice 434; relation to merit 433, 674–5, 724–8, 726, 743. *See also facere quod in se est* doctrine; grace; merit; reward
Wyclif, John 12 n35, 210; as authority 15, 714, 715; doctrine of absolute necessity 12 n35, 16, 45, 180 n460, 242 n796, 306, 627; Luther's citation of 45, 280, 289, 306, 416, 446, 455, 636; teachings aligned with Luther 133, 183, 222, 250, 252, 284, 494, 596, 717 n1641, 720 n1654
– *De dominio divino* 12 n35

Zürich lxix, 130 n181
Zwickau prophets 144 n259
Zwingli, Huldrych (Ulrich) lxix, lxxi, 98 n11; abolition of images 130 n181; disagreement with Luther 129 n172, 130, 132 n193, 143, 235; views on the Eucharist 98, 115 n114, 133 n202, 222, 256 n877, 635 n1269
– *De vera et falsa religione* 98 n11

This page intentionally left blank

This book

was designed by

VAL COOKE

based on the series design by

ALLAN FLEMING

and was printed by

University

of Toronto

Press